

THE INTELLECTUALS

*AN EXPERIMENT
IN IRISH CLUB-LIFE*


CANON SHEEHAN

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THE INTELLECTUALS

BY CANON SHEEHAN, D.D.

LUKE DELMEGE: *A Novel.*

LISHEEN: *or the Test of the Spirits. A Novel.*

GLENANAAR: *A Novel of Irish Life.*

THE BLINDNESS OF DR. GRAY: *A Novel of Irish Life.*

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LOST ANGEL OF A RUINED PARADISE: *A Drama of Modern Life.*

THE INTELLECTUALS: *An Experiment in Irish Club-life.*

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

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IN IRISH CLUB-LIFE

BY

CANON SHEEHAN, D.D.

Author of

"My New Curate," "Luke Delmege," "Glenanaar,"
"The Blindness of Dr. Gray,"
etc., etc.

Patrick Augustine

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PREFACE

THIS volume is an attempt to describe a possibility which the author hopes lies latent in the future that is before his country; when, under the influences of wider and more rational systems of education, the barriers of racial and sectarian prejudices may be broken down, and the higher humanities accepted as an integral portion of social and domestic life. It should be superfluous to say that, where so many different and even contradictory opinions on all subjects are so freely expressed, it would be quite illogical to identify the author with any class of sentiments. He has endeavoured to make his characters speak and act in conformity with what may be regarded as their preconceived notions on the different subjects discussed, holding aloof from any partisanship, and seeking only proportion and congruity in the action and conversations that are recorded. If it will help to show that there are really no invincible antagonisms amongst the peoples who make up the commonwealth of Ireland, — no mutual repugnances that may not be removed by freer and kindlier intercourse with each other, he will be sufficiently rewarded.



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THE INTELLECTUALS

INTRODUCTORY

"THE Sunetoi"¹ (Club, Society, Association, or whatever other name you may please to add) originated in a manner that might be considered humiliating. In the drawing-room of an able and amiable doctor, and with no one else present but his gifted, if capricious lady, a young priest suddenly asked him, partly as a matter of duty, and partly with the freedom born of an old and well-established friendship, why he declined to become a member of the Catholic Young Men's Society.

"I think," said the priest, "that our good Catholic laymen of position should lend the sanction of their presence and co-operation to this Society. Look at the Young Men's Christian Association. Every leading Protestant in the parish is a member. Dr. C—— goes down every night to their rooms; and Mr. F—— gives lectures and magic-lantern entertainments. And what is more, if a young Protestant lad comes here from England, or Scotland, or Belfast, these gentlemen immediately call upon him, cordially invite him to their homes, make much of him, make him feel at home, and not a pariah amongst his own co-religionists."

There was a little warmth in the priest's voice.

The doctor smoked calmly during this monologue; and in the end, and as if about to reply, he blew a great cloud of smoke upwards towards the electric lamp. But he noticed that his wife was about to say something, so he merely remarked:

"You were about to say something, my dear?"

"Not much," said the doctor's wife; "but that I wholly

¹ *ol sunetoi* = The Esoterics — The Select.

disapprove of the doctor's joining that Society. But what is a pariah, Father?"

"An outcast, a leper, one with whom it is not fit to associate."

"I should be very sorry to treat any Christian in such a manner," said the doctor's wife. "But, really, Father," she added sweetly, "there are, and must be, social distinctions. Do you really mean that I should invite to tea, or dinner, every young lad that comes here, without ever considering who he is and what he may be?"

And the lady looked round her pretty drawing-room, as if she already saw her beautiful carpets worn by profane feet.

"No — o — o!" said the young priest, dubiously. "But I think there is too much aloofness, too much conservatism, too much — well, it is an ugly word, but expressive — too much 'classiness' amongst Catholics. Somehow there is a want of Christian equality amongst them. You are all good and kind and tender towards the poor; but when there's a question of social intercourse, you put everyone, outside a certain and very undefined class, in quarantine."

"And quite proper," said the doctor's wife. "There *must* be class-distinctions; otherwise society could not hold together. And, now, Father," she continued, although she grew a little paler beneath the eyes, "I *must* say that I *altogether* disapprove of such sermons as you preached last Sunday. I haven't got one bit of good from Beatrice since."

"What was it about?" said the young priest, passing his hands dreamily across his forehead, "for I'm sure I forget."

"Of course," said the lady. "That shows it was not properly prepared. And, really, when clergymen enter the pulpit and attempt to teach the people, they should measure their words. I'm sure I shall never get a bit of good from that girl again."

"I didn't know you had a daughter named Beatrice," said the priest, looking in a puzzled manner towards the doctor.

The doctor shook his head, and said nothing.

"It is not my daughter," said the lady. "'Tis my servant; and when clergymen talk about the duties of masters and mistresses towards servants — kindness, forbearance, and all that kind of thing — we know what to expect."

"I really didn't know you had a young servant named Beatrice," said the priest, looking around in a bewildered way.

There was an ominous silence for a few seconds. Then the doctor said:

"Did you ever read the 'Autocrat of the Breakfast-table'?"

"Of course."

"Well," he said, holding his pipe at arm's length, and studying it critically, "I think it is in that book, or one of its companion volumes, the author makes a wise remark. He says that nobody minds what clergymen do; but if a doctor goes on a public platform, or takes an active part in anything whatever outside the business of his profession, he at once loses his professional reputation and his practice with it. You see, the public will argue in a twofold manner. They will say, this man cannot have many patients when he has time for platform lecturing; or this man cannot be studying his professional subjects when he is always dabbling in literature and science, and such things. And the public draw away, and the banker's balance goes down to zero. No, Father, it would never do."

"But, but," said the priest, "Protestant gentlemen do all that, and do not suffer."

"Quite so," said the doctor. "But you need hardly be told, my dear Father, that Protestants can do what no Catholic dare do in this country."

And there was no answer.

"Now," said Mrs. Holden, as if she felt she was obliged to make some *amende* for her feminine criticism on the pulpit, "if we had some little society or meetings, of our own, in our *own class*, such as we had long ago in dear old Kingstown, it would really help to spend the winter evenings pleasantly; and I'm sure I don't like to see James going so much to that

horrid old club, where they play bridge, poker, and such things."

"Well, it is a happy coincidence," said the young priest, who was not in the least resentful, "that Mrs. Skelton was just speaking of such little gatherings the other evening."

"Indeed?" said Mrs. Holden, lifting her eyebrows a little, whilst the doctor shot a warning glance at the speaker.

"Yes!" said the young priest, unheeding. "There were a few people there; and Mrs. Skelton spoke enthusiastically about the happy times when friends dropped in informally, and brought their music and their mandolines, and a few hours passed away so pleasantly. And a young Englishman (he has just come over as assistant-engineer in the Navy yard) brightened up at once, and wanted then and there to start a Literary and Scientific Association, such as they have, he said, all over England."

"I'm sure," said Mrs. Holden, with an imperceptible shrug, "that would suit Mrs. Skelton admirably. A — *Literary* — and — *Scientific* Society!"

"Who is this young gentleman?" asked the doctor.

"Well, I don't know very well," said the priest. "His name is Hunt — Reginald Hunt!"

"Rather a pretty name!" murmured Mrs. Holden. "Is he good-looking?"

"Well, that's a branch of the science of æsthetics," said the young priest (it must be admitted, somewhat sarcastically), "with which I'm not well acquainted. But I would say that he *is* handsome — very pale, clean-cut features, darkish fair hair. He says he's twenty-four. He looks about seventeen."

"But is he a gentleman?" said Mrs. Holden. "Because very common people nowadays can pass examinations, and all that, but they may not be suitable for society."

"Is he a Catholic?" said the doctor, demurely.

"No. He's Church of England!"

"There, my dear," said the doctor, turning to his wife.

"He's a Protestant and an Englishman. What more do you require?"

Mrs. Holden shot a suspicious glance at her spouse, which he bore unflinchingly. Then she said:

"But how did Mrs. Skelton come to know him?"

"I dare say he had some business at the Bank in Cork," said the priest. "He has the reputation of being very wealthy and belonging to some county family in England."

"There, my dear, what more do you want?" said the doctor. But his good wife sat musing.

"I think you should call on Mr. Hunt," she said at length. But the doctor shook his head.

"You were speaking about a Club?" he said to the priest.

"Yes! He proposed that a few gentlemen should meet once a week in an informal manner —"

"A few gentlemen?" interjected Mrs. Holden. "Then you exclude all ladies?"

"The proposal is not mine," said the priest, demurely. "It is Mr. Hunt's. Mr. Skelton, indeed, hinted that ladies could never keep the rules."

"Of course," said the doctor's wife. "That's just like Mr. Skelton. Really, managers of banks and gentlemen who have to do with common people seem to lose all refinement."

"Quite so!" said the doctor. "Priests, for example!"

"And doctors," said the young priest, laughing.

"Well, all I know is," said Mrs. Holden, "that if there be no ladies, there will be no club. Or, if there be, it will speedily degenerate into — into — into — something awful!"

"I was altogether in favour of the ladies," said the priest. "I have always held that they are quite the equals of the sterner sex in intellectual matters, quite their superiors in moral conduct. But the doubt seemed to be whether they could observe some of the rules."

"Then the whole thing is arranged, and the rules are drawn up?" said Mrs. Holden, with a frown on her white forehead.

"Roughly," said the young priest. "They are in a crude, unfinished condition. They will be, in due course, submitted to the members for their final sanction."

"And, pray, what are the rules which ladies cannot accept, or obey?"

"I take the solemn responsibility of mentioning one, which will be decidedly embarrassing. It runs thus — always, remember, in its initial and raw state:

'That the material entertainment at each house shall be of the simplest description, viz., plain tea, and bread and butter.'

"Now, that looks easy enough, but it cannot be observed by ladies."

"Why?" said Mr. Holden, with wide eyes.

"Because Mrs. Holden has exquisite Sèvres china, and *will* insist upon adding fairy cakes and sandwiches; and Mrs. Skelton has Crown Derby, and *will* insist upon getting an elaborate *menu* from the restaurant."

"Yes!" said Mrs. Holden, musingly. "I believe she doesn't — indeed, she cannot — keep a good cook. But what is the other rule?"

"That no comment be permitted on any poem or essay or short story, but that' —"

"I beg your pardon," said Mrs. Holden, "did you say 'poem'? Then, there is to be poetry, and all that kind of thing?"

"Of course," was the reply. "This is to be a society of select people, who meet together for amusement, instruction, and edification."

"Then you needn't expect any poetry from me," said the lady. "Fancy! The idea of a woman like me sitting down to write poetry like any chit of sixteen!"

"You can draw upon past efforts, Jennie," said her husband. "Don't you remember those lovely lines you wrote to me on my thirty-first birthday? Never mind, Father! Mrs. Holden has a whole portfolio full of verses, and one, at

least, has got into print. What's that it was? White Thorn, or White Hyacinth, or White Something!"

Mrs. Holden didn't know whether she ought to be pleased or angry with her husband; so she said:

"You were just remarking, Father, that no comment was to be made; but that — that what?"

"Oh!" said the priest, reading from his notes. "'But that the Society proceed immediately to music.'"

A little flush of pleasure gathered over the lady's face at the word "music," and she drew the rings up on her finger, as if she were just seated at the piano. She was far and away the most accomplished *pianiste* in the neighbourhood; and she had a good contralto voice. Mrs. Skelton didn't know *B sharp* from *C flat*.

"That's delightful," she said; "and how long is that part of the programme to continue?"

"One hour. The arrangement is: — Half-hour for desultory conversation and remarks on papers read at last meeting, if anyone can remember them; half-hour for poems and original compositions; one hour, music and tea!"

"That's really thoughtful. I must ask down Herr and Madame Baumgarten. They can bring their 'cellos, you know; and perhaps Madame Despard and her clever daughter would come also!"

"But, my dear Mrs. Holden," said the priest in alarm, "that would never do. This society must do its own work; otherwise we should be washed out and swamped by celebrities of every kind —"

"Well, then, who *are* the members, the actual members?" she said peevishly. "It seems to me that you are very exclusive."

"First of all, it is quite clear that we must limit the number. I have suggested eight, or, at very most, ten. Beyond that the Society would become unwieldy. Now, let me see! We have Dr. and Mrs. Holden, Mr. and Mrs. Skelton, Mr. Reginald Hunt, and my humble self. I have been thinking

of asking down Professor Sedgwick, of the Queen's College. He is a very learned, and what is more important, a very charming man."

"There is a shocking preponderance of men," said Mrs. Holden. "Imagine the plight of two ladies in such a crowd. Not but that Mrs. Skelton is masculine enough ——"

"Propose any lady of your own acquaintance," interposed the priest, in the interests of charity, it may be presumed, "and I shall guarantee her acceptance. We have at least two vacancies to fill."

"Well, then, I suggest Miss Hope, Miss Hester Hope. She is a B.A. of the Royal, and looks charming in her hood and gown. The profile in the photograph is good; but I prefer the three-quarter face."

"Very good! Anyone else?"

"I think there is now too great a preponderance of Roman Catholics. Why, Mr. Hunt is the only Protestant, except the Professor. That's not fair to him; and I hate this spirit of intolerance amongst Catholics. Really, Protestants are quite as nice, and sometimes much superior. Can you think of anyone, James?"

But James shook his head.

"I'll remain a humble member, as you seem to like it, Jennie," he said. "But I disclaim all responsibility for the cast of the play."

"Well, then, I'll suggest Miss Fraser. She is Scotch, and highly intellectual. Thus we have the three nations — the shamrock, the rose, and the thistle."

This allusion was so happy, that the two gentlemen clapped their hands gently; and the priest, folding up his note-book, said:

"It's a good beginning. May it prosper!"

But the doctor shrugged his shoulders and relit his pipe. He was a horrible sceptic.

"It will end prematurely," he said, "or else, after weeks of prolonged agony, it will terminate in some horrible catas-

trophe — one or two unhappy marriages, at least. However ———”

“You’re always croaking, James,” said his wife. “I should hate to see you around my sick-bed. Everything will go right, you’ll find, Father, if you allow me to bring down sometimes Herr Baumgarten or Madame Despard. She’s simply perfect with her violin; and my piano has just been tuned to concert pitch. But — you never told us what our Society is to be called. Surely not ‘Literary and Scientific?’”

“No!” said the young priest, rising. “I have been casting around for a title, and I have decided on calling ourselves ‘The Sunetoi.’ ‘Synetics’ would be the English form, but I prefer to keep the Greek!”

“And what is ‘Sun — Sun —?’” asked the lady.

“Oh, well, the doctor will hunt up his Greek dictionary ———”

“For heaven’s sake,” said the doctor, “tell it at once; if you don’t want to have a lunatic on your hands.”

“But you took the gold medal in Greek ———”

“Never mind. I couldn’t tell the Greek characters now. Tell Jennie what is the infernal thing, and have done with it.”

“Well, really, James,” said his wife reprovingly, “you are becoming quite profane. I am sure it is that old Major Reilly who is infecting you with his horrible language. I’m told that every second word is an oath with him.”

“What is — that — word?” said the doctor, keeping down his rising temper.

“Oh, it means clever people, people of quick understanding and grasp of intellect, you know.”

“I’m sure that’s really nice,” murmured Mrs. Holden. “And, of course, the common people cannot laugh at us. They won’t understand, fortunately; and they are becoming horribly sarcastic. Fancy now ———”

“I’ll see you to the door,” said the doctor, as the young priest drew on his gloves. “Say good-night, Jennie!”

And Mrs. Holden said “good-night!” in a most fascinating

manner; and then sat down at the piano, and carefully went over one of Bach's symphonies.

"There! That's what you have put me in for!" said the doctor grimly, as they stood at the door, and the notes of the grand Erard floated down and outwards to the sea. "That — thing won't stop, night or day, for a month; and I thought I was done with it for ever!"

"Cheer up!" said the young priest. "You'll find we shall have pleasant reunions. By the way, I'm a little disconcerted about what Mrs. Holden said about your new servant. I always prided myself upon knowing every man, woman, and child in my district. Who is this Beatrice? What's her surname?"

"Ommaney," replied the doctor, looking all around the sky, as if he were searching for a new star.

"Ommaney?" said the priest, writing the name phonetically in his note-book under the electric arc.

"Yes! and remember the accent is on the first syllable — Om!"

"Ommaney! Ommaney! What a curious name! Is she English or German?"

"I should say 'High Dutch,'" said the doctor. "She came to us from Wilton, where she was under-housemaid."

"Wilton? Mrs. Seymour's? Why the under-housemaid there was Bridgie O'Mahony! It couldn't be the same?"

"Oh, dear no!" replied the doctor. "Bridgie O'Mahony has vanished into space — *evasit, erupit* — 'gone like the baseless fabric of a vision'; and Beatrice Ommaney has taken her place. Good-night!"

"Good-night!" said the young priest; but all along by Eastbourne, and until he put the latch-key in his own door, he was wondering who Beatrice could be.

SESSION FIRST

It took place, as was right and fitting, in the young priest's, Father Dillon's, house. He was slightly nervous about the experiment, not knowing how such fine people would regard his little *ménage*. But he had no need to be. They came with their hearts full of pity and charity for a celibate. They were fully prepared for all kinds of masculine *méprises* and defects; for the absence of all those little nameless gracious things that mark the presence of a woman's hand. A folding door divided his front parlour with its large windows, that seemed to expand outwards and enfold the vast and beautiful sea-scape, from a back room that served as dining-hall and library, with a perspective of a yard, which was about six feet in breadth and length, and which terminated in a white-washed wall, which, when the sun fell upon it, lighted the dark room as if it were a snow-refraction. But front, illimitable, and rear, obscure and narrow, were now shut out by the heavy curtains, which fell and folded themselves by sheer weight to the ground; and the visitors saw but a beautiful room, breaking into another, and reduplicated by handsome mirrors, which caught the electric lights and made long vistas far away. There were a few of Finden's engravings on the wall, and one or two Bartolozzis. In a corner, as if not wishing to boast too much of its value, was an oil painting, hardly more than a foot square. Visitors were curious about it. Once in a moment of forgetfulness Father Dillon murmured something to a clerical friend, which seemed to sound like *Carlo Dolci*. He never heard the end of that remark. It became the torment of his life.

At eight o'clock, with a punctuality that seemed miraculous in a country where lordly indifference to time and other

people's convenience is supposed to be a mark of nobility, the *Sunetoi* assembled. There was just a little formality and freeziness at first, because some of the guests were unknown to the others; and, as it was supposed to be an intellectual gathering, where there might possibly be a clash of intellect, they seemed to be measuring one another like athletes in a ring. Fortunately, Mrs. Holden broke the spell, for after one or two feminine ejaculations about the pretty rooms, she ran her jewelled fingers along the keys of the piano, which lay open, and then placed her music quite close to her chair.

After a few indifferent remarks, Father Dillon, taking up a pen, and affecting more coolness than he felt, called the muster-roll. All answered. Then, toying with the pen, he said, in that measured manner that conceals a good deal of nervousness:

"I feel greatly obliged by your prompt and punctual attendance, ladies and gentlemen; and, as I have the privilege of inaugurating our first meeting, as well as originating this Society, which I hope will yet be famous, perhaps I may be expected to make a few preliminary remarks, as a prologue to our little drama. I have not the slightest wish to make our little club a mere occasion for amusement, or a happy way of getting rid of that most troublesome thing — unoccupied time. I wish that it may prove a source of enlightenment and instruction also; a means of elevating our thoughts above the common level. Hence there will be, there must be, much discussion on all subjects of common interest to educated people — music, the drama, books, science, art, even politics and religion. The only topic that we shall not discuss is probably bimetallism; but, perhaps, Mr. Skelton would cast light even there?"

"I'm afraid not," said Mr. Skelton, looking a little uneasy. "You see, I am so accustomed to handling three metals, gold, silver and coppers, I could never bring my mind to contemplate two."

"That reminds me," said Professor Sedgwick, "of a great

financier, who dealt in millions, but who could not, if he got the world for it, count the change of a shilling."

"Well, perhaps it reflects no discredit," said Father Dillon continuing. "There are only two men in the United Kingdom who were able to master the secret of bimetallism, Mr. Balfour and Archbishop Walsh, of Dublin. The lunatic asylums are filled with those who tried and failed."

"How horrible!" murmured Mrs. Holden to Mrs. Skelton. "I didn't know that banking was such a dangerous profession."

"But, as I was saying," continued Father Dillon, "we must now be prepared to discuss all subjects; and I beg to anticipate for such discussions the widest tolerance of opinion, and perfect equanimity of temper. There are few who have learned that the first condition of getting on in life, unless we have the genius to sweep through it in a tempest, is to get rid of the idea of our own infallibility. That idea is born with most men. It is an innate idea—a preconception that comes from we know not where. But our first duty is to abandon it. A few years ago, a society like ours, if I may compare great things with little, was formed in London. It was a heterogeneous mixture, consisting of Atheists, Agnostics, Catholics, Dissenters, Anglicans. The beginning was not auspicious. At the first meeting, the chairman made observations similar to those I am making now—a general exhortation to gentle toleration of adverse opinion, and a general divestment of the sense of personal inerrancy. 'I'm sure,' said one member, a rather militant one, 'that I shall hear with patience the most opposite opinions to my own; but I shall not stand by and hear such fundamental questions as the existence of God discussed.' 'And I,' said another, 'am the most tolerant of men; but I cannot be expected to bear with equanimity such a novel and gratuitous assumption.' There was the crossing of swords at the beginning; but the belligerents shook hands, and after many years parted from each other with mutual respect and kindness of feeling. Now, I am hoping that when we wind up the affairs of our

Society, be it soon or in the far future, we shall also part from each other with even more esteem and respect than we have happily brought to this, our inaugural meeting. There is just one word more to say — a corollary of this. I have noticed in recent years the incipience, and even the widespread prevalence in Ireland of a habit of speech which I deplore. It is the introduction of French sarcasm, without the redemption of French wit. I see it everywhere. We are become a nation of sneering would-be *philosophes*. No one speaks seriously. In our newspapers the most shocking and offensive personalities, even to the extent of using ribald nicknames, are introduced; and, strange to say, these papers are bought and read purely for the sake of seeing those stinging personalities. I have seen good men, and men whose profession should place their tone of thought on a higher level, chuckling with laughter over these abominable pasquinades. And the evil habit seems to have crept into all ranks of society, so much so that the young are taught to protect themselves from offence by cultivating the evil talent of saying sharp things, and thus warding off the arrows of forked tongues from themselves. I fear very much, although the evil seems to be of recent growth, that it is really indigenous, and has only now become endemic, for we read of old Irish bards going from house to house of chieftains, and then composing pasquinades on their hosts if they considered themselves treated with scant hospitality. They thus became the terror of the country; and now, the newspaper and the witling take the place of the ragged and wandering bard. Life is not taken seriously. The vast and complex interests of humanity are brought under the tongues of the satirist and shrivelled up; and all the sacred emotions that lift man above the 'beasts that tare each other in their slime' are focussed under the burning-glass of stinging criticism, and reduced to bitter ashes in the horrible experiment. The great arts of poetry, music, painting, sculpture, seem to be regarded with much the same tolerant contempt with which people speak of young ladies'

accomplishments. The art of speaking well — I don't mean in public oratorical displays, but in private — the art of enunciating distinctly, modulating our voices until they break into music, is called effeminacy and affectation; and so with everything else, until the time may come when we shall carry our talents into the sacred places, and bring the vessels of the temple into some satrap's feast."

There was a slight pause, as the speaker shifted his seat, and looked up some notes. Mrs. Holden took occasion to whisper to Mrs. Skelton:

"I wonder what does Father Dillon take us for? Did he suppose we were a District Council, or a Board of Guardians?"

But Mr. Hunt, with head modestly bent down in an attitude of serious attention, said in a very quiet, even tone:

"I fear, sir, that the Voltairean spirit which you think is creeping into Ireland is not limited to so narrow a sphere. Are there not such papers as *Le Rire*, the *Simplicissimus* of Munich, and now the *Asino* and *Mulo* of Rome? I fear that that mocking spirit is not of yesterday. You know there was an Aristophanes and a Plautus; and that Æschylus himself did not escape the parody."

"Quite so," said the priest, arranging his notes, "but how do these writers rank? Were they the teachers and prophets of their generations; or the buffoons and clowns of the marketplace?"

"True! They do not rank high; but they may have had their uses. There may be evils that cannot be killed but by sarcasm, just as there are parasites that can only be killed with vitriol."

"Yes, I can understand how that may be, although I should not care myself to be the 'Pied Piper of Hamelin,' killing off by profession all the newts and toads and rats of the universe. But, when the whole nation turns away from the serious work of life to vitriol-throwing and rat-catching, I think that deplorable."

"Somehow," said Miss Fraser, speaking with the slightest

touch of a Scotch accent, "ironical literature seems to have had its uses. There were the 'Letters of Junius,' for example, and, surely, Pascal's 'Provinciales' are classics."

"I hardly agree with Miss Fraser," said Professor Sedgwick. "The 'Letters of Junius' are now hardly read, since their authorship seems ascertained; and, whatever was the vogue of the 'Provincial Letters' in their own time, their wit seems to be blunted now, as their premises are proved to have been utterly false and malicious."

"Is that possible?" asked Miss Fraser, with a slight look of surprise. "I never heard."

"There can be no doubt about it," said the Professor. "As a candid presentment of Catholic, or, as it is called, Jesuitical casuistry, the whole thing is utterly fraudulent. It raised a laugh then; the most patient or the most prejudiced student could hardly stifle a yawn over these letters now. And really it is so with all barbed and malevolent wit. Humour is immortal. The world never tires of it. Wit is ephemeral. It only catches men in their worst mood."

"I suppose for one that would read a squib of Voltaire's," said Miss Hope shyly, from a corner where she was hiding, "a thousand will read Don Quixote. And Don Quixote never hurt a human being; but Voltaire invented the guillotine."

"But," said Miss Fraser, "I confess myself puzzled. It was only the other day I read in some enthusiastic review that Cardinal Newman was a master of irony, and that he overwhelmed all antagonists by that weapon."

"I am afraid we are mixing things up," said the Professor, "and confounding wit, humour, sarcasm and irony, which differ specifically. But, really, Miss Fraser, it is the old question: whether it is better to build up or pull down, or, to use a rather hackneyed phrase, whether destructive criticism or constructive creation is better for mankind. Perhaps it will put matters in a nutshell if I ask you, as a compatriot of Robert Burns, whether he has done better in 'Holy Willie,' or in 'Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled'?"

Miss Fraser's pale face flushed redly, whether with anger or shame, it would be difficult to tell. But she said nothing; and Father Dilllon, promptly interfering, said:

"Whatever be our opinions about theories, one thing we shall insist upon in practice, and that is: Whilst the fullest discussion will be permitted on our own work, or any subject of transitory interest, anything in the shape of sarcasm, or irony, shall be rigidly excluded. And that is one reason why I have ventured to lay down the rule that we shall not discuss poem or paper *sur le champ*, but after mature consideration."

"And now, ladies and gentlemen," he continued, "we have devoted so much time to this initial question, we must push onward. And, as we could not make any other arrangement, I have asked Mr. Hunt to read something for us, before we pass on to the lighter pleasures of the evening."

And Mr. Hunt, without apology, or pretence of disarming criticism, took a note-book from his pocket, and said:

"This is one of a series of poems, which I have called 'Fire-side Visitors.' I have placed it on New Year's Eve. It is, of course, purely imaginative."

The gentlemen crossed their legs; Mrs. Holden looked impatient, and whispered: "Will it be long?" Mrs. Skelton said in a whisper: "I hope not;" the Professor looked critical; Miss Fraser looked straight at the pale boyish face, which betrayed not the slightest emotion; Miss Hester Hope stared upwards at an engraving named 'The Spirit of the Summit,' and seemed to be engrossed in it, although every sense was alert. She was wondering in what key, high or low, would the initial music of their *Æsthetik-Verein* be placed. Very calmly, and with low, but perfectly modulated intonation, Mr. Hunt read:

ÆGINA

Lower the lamp, Ægina, and let us look at the fire,
Dappling our faces with light or shade, as the flames expire.
Looked you for ever thus, a Rembrandt would certainly paint
You for a Seville gipsy, or you for a sweet-eyed saint.

Looked you for ever thus, and just what the firelight has made —
One profile in the crimson, and one in the blackest shade —
I at least would consent, for that it symbolled your soul,
Which needs to be studied in twain, ere one can interpret the whole.

Somehow it seems so strange — your face that is turned to me,
Red as the ruby flame of a sun on a crimson sea,
Is yet but a half revelation, lacking some secret keys.
The red and the black are blent, I think, in a Mephistopheles.

Fie! That's an ugly slip; I recall the words I have said,
Even without the rebuke in that swift turn of your head.
Turn back your face, Ægina, and look at the leaping flame,
Why do you stare me thus, as if I were to share your blame?

Proud you did err, Ægina, and what is the use of pride?
A leap of the ocean's heart, as it swells the white moontide;
A great round curve that hollows and billows along the shore;
A crash on unheeding sands, a foaming sheet, and no more.

Foam, and fret, and foam, and then it dies on the salt sea-sands,
I gather it, and 'tis gone, as a soul from between my hands.
And that is the way of pride, and the rage of sinful men —
Foam, and fret and foam, and a peace cometh never again.

Why do you always bend forwards, hands clasped tight on your
knees,
Looking like one whom a dream has fled which you cannot seize?
'Tis only children, you know, who read their fate in the flare,
Valley and height, an uplifted weight, or its dole to bear.

Do you know what a weird conceit has just flashed on to my mind?
I thought you were dead and lost in the years that have sped behind;
Dead and lost in the hollow, where all things living must end,
Passed where the living Voice decides — a foe to God, or a friend.

You were not ruddy and dark, as now, but a vision pale,
Sainted and sweet as the spirits that touch the Holy Grail.
And all your loveliness, blind and speechless, like early dawn,
For death is the dawn, Ægina, when the blinds of life are drawn.

But if thou wert pale in death, why comest thou thus to-night,
Ruddy and dark as the flames; or the coals in the dimmed firelight?
You may deem it a change for the better; but I must candidly own
I liked you best in the pallor of Death's white monotone.

So you won't speak, or tell me the secrets of other life,
Me who am sick and weary of a world of pain and strife;
Ah, then, go back to your place in the dim eternities;
You, Spirits, seem to have lost the mortal's desire to please.

Lo, you are gone! and there by my fire is a vacant seat;
There's not a trace of your shadow — a print of phantom feet.
The cinders glitter and lie; the ashes flare and are dead,
Perhaps it is all a dream, a vision by fancy fed.

I never knew you, Ægina; I never heard of your name;
I know you never sat there in the light of that ruddy flame.
But, somehow to-night the brain lacks blood, and that merry elf,
Fancy, is waving her wings, and mixing shadows and self.

Yet, every vision leaveth a problem that none might solve,
While ever the lazy wheels of the human mind revolve.
Is it the fancy that's real? the Phantom only the Flesh?
That melts like a ghostly snow through the webs of the winter's
mesh?

Steeped in a silver radiance there dreamed a resplendent cloud;
Hung on its shining breast the Bird of Night sang long, sang loud;
Down went the sun; the silver did fade to an ashen gray;
Deep in its dewy grotto the panting Oriole lay.

Which was the Vision here — the cloud or the dew-wingéd bird?
Was it a dream I saw, or was it an echo I heard?
Did I behold thee, Ægina, or else some saint betimes?
There, I have watched too long, too late! Hark to the midnight
chimes!

He folded the paper without a smile, and taking out a notebook, he placed it carefully between the leaves. There was

deep silence all around, until Father Dillon, bending over the boy, seemed to be asking him some questions in a whisper. Fortunately, this engaged Mr. Hunt's attention, otherwise he would have heard Mrs. Holden's voice asking Mrs. Skelton:

"Do you understand all that? Do you know I have a feeling that it was not quite proper. Who was this Ægina? And what's an oriole? And how could he address the — the lady if she wasn't there at all? But I suppose we mustn't discuss it. When shall we have tea, I wonder?"

To this latter question Father Dillon gave a prompt reply by asking Mrs. Holden to preside at the tea-table in the inner room. And then? Well, then Mrs. Holden sat down, and after a little demur, in which she declared she hadn't opened a piano for some months, and really, one gets out of practice so easily, etc., she astonished her audience by a fugue from this, a symphony from that, and a "study" from some other artist. She rose up in a blaze of triumph, and sat down by her friend, Mrs. Skelton, saying:

"Really, you cannot expect otherwise in a priest's house, I suppose; but that piano is abominably out of tune. I don't think I shall touch it again. Do you notice now, how that D ciphers? She can never sing to such music."

This was an allusion to Miss Fraser, who was just playing the initial notes of "Bonnie Prince Charlie." Like a true Scotchwoman, she sang the songs of her country.

And it was beautiful. It was that mighty legend set to music that has gripped the hearts of Scotchmen for centuries, and which, under every aspect of seeming loyalty, will apparently never lose its hold upon the race.

"If I weren't an Irishman, I would wish to be a Scotchman," said Father Dillon, enthusiastically. "The very names of the Scottish clans seem to have a trumpet blast in them; and I think that noble loyalty to a conquered and flying Prince is probably the noblest national trait that I have seen in history. I cannot worship a Napoleon, but I can worship a Duc d'Enghien dying silently and bravely. And I cannot sympathise

with an English king, but with a Scotch fugitive. Is the tradition still alive in Scotland, Miss Fraser?"

"It is undying," she said, whilst she seemed to try to keep down her own kindled enthusiasm. "We cannot show it; but there are few families in Scotland, outside the manufacturing districts, where Prince Charlie is not worshipped."

"These are the things that redeem our race," said Father Dillon. "When you grow disgusted at the scullions that bow down before the conqueror and the tyrant, it is something to be able to turn to a race that cherishes its very traditions of defeat. Scottish history did not end in Culloden."

"It would have recommenced there," said Professor Sedgwick, "only for an unfortunate Irishman, called Sullivan. It was he put the Macdonalds in the left wing, which they deemed a dishonour, and they refused to fight."

"Is that so?" said the priest, turning to Miss Fraser in alarm. He had grown quite pale with the shame of the thing.

"I'm afraid so," she said humbly. "If they had burst into the fray, they would have scattered the Southrons. They were so angry at their own humiliation and the perfidy that was practised on them, they hacked and hewed the gorse and heather with their claymores."

It was unpleasant for the host, who didn't expect the conversation to take that turn. Mr. Hunt seemed to allow the ghost of a smile to hover around his lips. There were hasty arrangements made for the next meeting, and the first Session was closed.

SESSION SECOND

FATHER DILLON was uneasy, and yet he had no cause. What was it to him if a busybody named Sullivan did place a certain Scottish clan in what they deemed a place of dishonour as far back as the middle of the eighteenth century? Why should that fact disturb the sleep and digestion of a young priest in the latter years of the nineteenth century? And yet such was the case. The pleasure of that first meeting and its success were marred for him by those few words spoken at the end. He ransacked his library that week, but he had not a single page of history that would explain away that untoward event. But he could not let it pass. He would seek further information.

The second Session was held at Mrs. Skelton's. She was a quiet person, given to much reading. In the beginning of her married life, which was very happy, she had made gallant efforts to wean away Robert, her husband, from certain tricks of speech, and habits of life, which she deemed vulgar. But her efforts were a failure. She gave him up; and henceforward was a very happy woman. She had asked for that second Session, because she was afraid of being overwhelmed by the splendid ambition of the doctor's wife. But she needn't have been afraid. The *Villa Reale* was a splendid building; and although the manager's salary was limited, his wife had contrived to make his home not only comfortable, but luxurious.

The *Sunetoi* were hardly assembled when Father Dillon, exercising his rights as chairman, reopened the discussion where it had terminated the last evening.

"Do you know, Miss Fraser," he said, "I felt somewhat humiliated to think that it was a fellow-countryman of mine

who spoiled the chances of Prince Charlie at Culloden? Is it quite certain? What could have brought Sullivan there?"

"I am afraid there is no doubt of the historical fact," said Miss Fraser. "Sullivan was adjutant to the Prince, and had the disposition of the forces at his command. For some reason, hitherto unknown, he removed the Macdonalds from the right wing, the place of honour which the Clan Coila had held in every Scottish army since Bannockburn. They resented it; and in the charge of the Camerons, Stuarts, MacLeans and Frasers, they refused to take a part; and slashed the heather instead of the English enemy. But for that, the Prince would have triumphed, and the history of Scotland have been changed, for the same Highlanders, who had won Falkirk in ten minutes and Prestonpans in four minutes, would have routed the English army."

Miss Fraser seemed to know the history of Scotland.

"But," she added, with feminine consideration for wounded national feelings, "you must remember as a set-off against this, that the conqueror at Culloden, the Duke of Cumberland, had fled before the Irish at Fontenoy."

"There, you're quits," said Mr. Hunt, laughing. "But, alas! for *my* countrymen, beaten at Fontenoy, and shamed at Culloden, for, I believe, the English army was double that of the Prince in numbers, and had powerful artillery besides."

Father Dillon brightened up, and then began to accuse himself.

"There is no use in trying to divest oneself of insular prejudices," he said. "I have tried to take large views of things, but my racial pride will break out. Imagine that little incident at Culloden has disturbed my peace of mind for a week."

"And it is well," said Professor Sedgwick, breaking in. "You can no more divest yourself of the sentiment of race than of your individuality. There is no need for racial antagonism, except perhaps the antagonism of honourable

emulation. But there is great need for difference of species, mental and physical. Otherwise, we should have a race of hybrids."

"Quite so," said Mr. Hunt. "And this would be the secret of the world's happiness, if men were wise enough to know it. But you cannot have honourable emulation between the races so long as human nature remains what it is. The ideal condition of human society is that in which there should be mutual co-operation — all classes in the same country, and all races on the same continent, and all continents in the same world, working together harmoniously for the common welfare. If this ideal were, or could be realised, you would have the millennium. War, anarchy, socialism, nihilism, would be heard of no more. You would have the 'Parliament of men, the federation of the world.' And this it was which Christianity foreshadowed. Alas! you can't expel nature. So long as in the natural kingdom, the conditions of natural selection hold, it is quite in vain to preach to the hawk, or the serpent, or the spider: Love one another! So, too, is it vain to suppose that you can realise that happy condition when men will cease from competition, and the strong will forego their privileges and help and succour the weak."

"One would be prepared for that," said the Professor, "because Nature will break through the crust of principle, which in most men is as thin as pie-crust, and only made to be broken; but, the strange thing is, that the whole world, even good men, seem to abandon the very fiction of principle in worship of brute strength and success. I think it was Elizabeth Barrett Browning who half-condoned all the brutalities of Napoleon by saying that he had, at least, the talent of making men love him."

"I wonder was it the man they loved, or their own vanity in the man?" said Miss Hope.

"That is a profound observation," said the Professor, smiling. "It brings all human feelings — love, hatred, enthusiasm, patriotism, racial dislikes, religious intolerance —

down to the great, of not the greatest common measure, the inevitable EGO."

Miss Hope looked as if she were not quite sure that this was meant as a compliment, or otherwise; but she bravely continued:

"You will have noticed that his soldiers' enthusiasm for their General, Consul and Emperor always rose highest after some great victory, in whose glory they shared. In the end, after Moscow, Leipsic, Bautzen, Lutzen, his army abandoned him; and at Fontainebleau his marshals, every one, except Macdonald, urged his abdication. Even Ney swore to the Bourbon king that if Bonaparte came back from Elba he would drag him in an iron cage to the feet of Louis in Paris. Somehow, that does not sound like love — at least, the love that outlasts adversity."

"And yet," said the Professor, "even that does not shake the original conviction that brute force commands the respect even of excellent Christians, who are bidden to be 'meek and humble of heart.'"

"In the late plebiscite taken by the *Figaro*, as to who was France's greatest and best, our *Pasteur* took first place with a million and a half votes; Napoleon was fifth."

The speaker was Dr. Holden, who had hitherto been a silent spectator, and therefore was heard with not a little surprise. The sceptic was again heard, when Mr. Hunt said:

"Only another aspect of the anti-militarism which will plunge France in irretrievable ruin."

"But she will have become the pioneer of peace," murmured Miss Fraser.

"To her own detriment," said Mr. Hunt. "It is bad for nations as well as for individuals, to break away into problems, and refuse to accept facts. Now, France essays to solve the problem of universal brotherhood. It is insoluble. The hard fact is that this planet of ours is the convict-hulk of the universe, wheeling round in the vast ocean of infinity, and dumping down the irreclaimable prisoners on some desolate shore

of fire and horror and everlasting woe. In such a convict-hulk, what can you expect of the prisoners under hatches and behind bars but mutual hate and the grasping of murderous hands?"

Although he spoke in low, level tones, the words were so awful that they sent a thrill of horror through the audience. Father Dillon, as chairman, looked puzzled as well as shocked. He felt that the little ship of his hopes was already upon the breakers; and he knew that he would have to exercise all his skill as pilot to save her. Clearly, he should at once put down his helm, and steer far away. He turned with a deprecatory smile towards Mr. Hunt, and said:

"Let us hear one of your 'Fireside Visitors,' Mr. Hunt. 'Ægina' was so delightful; was it not, Mrs. Holden?"

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Holden. "I really — did — not quite understand; but I'm sure it was all right, you know!"

"Mrs. Holden is very kind," said the young poet, with a faint smile, "but I should be presuming very much on the patience of the company if I were to thrust forward my poor little productions in season and out of season. Some of the ladies, I'm sure, will —"

But the ladies demurred, and Mrs. Skelton said gently, and with that exquisite air of deference with which Catholics address their Protestant brethren:

"We have made you our poet-laureate, you know, Mr. Hunt, and we claim a poem, when we like, even without the butt of Malmsey."

"There, you are not proof against such a compliment," said Father Dillon, eager to get away from an alarming controversy. "I assure you 'Ægina' was haunting me since you dismissed her so summarily the last night."

"Well," said Mr. Hunt, with a little shrug of the shoulders, "when you draw your ticket in the lottery, you must be satisfied with the blank. If you do not like this, don't blame me! It has the merit of bearing a little on our late conversation. I have called our next visitor *Cynocephalus*."

CYNO-CEPHALUS. (*loquitur.*)

Listen, O Mortal-Immortal! O Beast-Angelic, give ear!
When you summon the babes of the future the ghosts of the past
appear.

Things shall be even as they have been, for though the cycle is vast,
Labouring on through the years, it rounds to perfection at last.

But you see I'm a sort of cynic; and I like to know the worth
Of your basal proofs that there shall be a novel heaven and earth.
Patient I'll measure your words, forecasting the times to be,
One note of hope is welcome 'mid the world's sad threnody.

An optimist, I believe, with a boundless infantine hope,
Given times and a time, and a free and unfettered scope,
Men will evolve into angels, as the beast has rounded to man,
And beyond? It is limitless now. It shall be as when Time began.

Oh, these are imperial visions, forecasting the things that shall be,
Like a poet's dreams, when he saddens behind an infinite sea;
And still he beholds in fancy, far beyond the horizon's line,
Heaven piled upon Heaven, from base to summit divine.

Begin. No? Then shall I. 'Tis a bestial world at best,
The teeth of the lion in the ox; the fang in the lion's breast;
A python coiled round a priest; maidens with pleading hands;
And a half-blind tyrant exults over babes crucified on the sands.

The tumbrils drive o'er the dead. There's a cairn of skulls at a
feast;

And a holocaust of children for a winged Numidian beast;
In Carthage, Moloch and Tanit! In Zion, Astarte and Baal!
In Egypt, Osiris! And She, of whom no man hath lifted the veil.

Carnage and lust, and blood! Blood, and carnage and lust!
Triumph for those who can; submission for those who must!
And the wail of a thrice-damned world, smiting the list'ning stars,
And the grin of tortured demons behind their prison bars!

Oh, you have broken the idols! Lo, the fragments are at our feet!
You have lifted the lowly up; and pulled the strong from their
seat;

And war echoes on unto war; the grass that is trampled amain
Is trampled again to-morrow, fat with the blood of the slain!

Ah! But the steamship and wires, and the earth-ball hung like
a net
Of railroads that gleam in the suns that rise, and the suns that set;
And the voices and answers that flash beneath where the wild
seas roll,
Like a foam-lashed beast, that unconscious, has been stricken into
a soul.

Certes, my friend, your world is lashed in a demon dance,
Spinning a wild minuet, like a priest in a hashish trance,
And then comes a mad collapse, and thrones are flung upon thrones,
And kings are squirming beneath, and a planet in agony groans.

Ah, but the songs of Sirens? But your Diva sings and sups!
What else? The dreams of poets? Their dreams are in their cups.
For never a poet yet has winged his empyrean flight
But in the trance of the poppy — in the opium's dread delight.

What else? The patriot's valour? He thinks of his price and
his tools;
Of his marble mausoleum, built by some purblind fools.
Hark you, my friend, all life is but self, and self, and self —
The lust of the eye, and the lust of the flesh, and the lust of power
and pelf.

The best of all possible worlds? Well, this is the grimmest joke,
The subtlest sarcasm ever the lips of a cynic spoke.
The best of all possible worlds? And there's only one that is
worse —

Gehenna, where men breathe flame, and every lip curves to a curse.

Harkening, a fool would think that life was a raree-show,
Instead of a Doomsday book with its "tears, lamentations and
woe."

A May-day game of forfeits, with flowers and a wreathed pole,
Not the red and creeping horrors, writ on the prophet's scroll.

Evoë! Evoë! Evoë! and the drunken satyrs reel;
And a voice in Rama is heard! There's blood on the Roman steel.
Hark the *Vau! Vau! Vau!* of the scoffers, the tribe that never
will die,
And the *Lamma Sabacthani* of a God in his agony.

Yes! I am harking back! and you think it isn't quite fair
To judge the beast called man in his foul and primordial lair;
Forward, and ever forward, evolving the type to be,
Until he rounds to a seraph. That is our destiny!

Shall I laugh, or go mad? Is this a mattoid's dream, or worse?
Is it only the darkness, or pride, involved in the primal curse?
I know no limits are set to human fancy and pride, —
The legend for ever renewed of the king and the wild sea-tide.

"Thus far," said the king, "and no farther!" The tide ran up
and lapped
The kingly feet; and the kingly robes with the bitter brine were
sapped.
"Thus far," saith the priest, "and no farther!" to the ape and
the tiger in man.
But the tiger snarls, and jabbars the ape, just as when time began.

"Good-night!" My chair was vacant; but a cloud-like radiance
shone,
And a Form from out the Radiance glittered, grew, and was gone.
"Three things there are," the spirit said, "which the Cynic's words
disprove —
The voice of the child, the face of the dead, and the soul of the
Friend you love!"

There was a sigh of relief in the room. The horror of the
thing seemed to culminate as the verses proceeded, until all
felt that if the terrible indictment were thus to terminate, it
would leave an ache and a void in their minds. The happier
ending was a relief. It was a word of hope after a prophecy
of despair.

"On my word, Mr. Hunt," said Father Dillon, "your midnight visitors promise to be unpleasant people. That cynic should have lived with the prophet Jeremias."

"He is human history," said Mr. Hunt, folding up his paper, and putting it away. "Until you can burn your historical books, and take tradition from the hearts of the people, that vision will return again and again."

"Take the unpleasant ringing from our ears, Mrs. Holden," said the priest. "And please play nothing classic to-night, for all classic music seems to have some hidden meaning."

"Ha! there's a subject, Miss Hope, for our next discussion — whether music and poetry shall be didactic or shall only please?" said the Professor.

But Miss Hope seemed to be absorbed in her own thoughts, and Mrs. Holden whispered to Mrs. Skelton:

"Did you notice how significantly Mr. Hunt looked toward Hester when he said: 'the soul of the Friend you love'? Take my word, there's a little romance beginning there!"

Then she went to the piano, and Bob Skelton whispered to the doctor:

"How long is this kind of thing to go on?"

"For ever and for ever!" said the doctor lugubriously.

"Do you know that young man gave me an idea?" said Mr. Skelton.

The doctor grasped his wrist hysterically. "An idea! Why, Skelton, that's a miracle! Hold it fast, man, won't you; and don't let it slip."

"Never fear! I won't startle you at the next meeting, but in a month's time look out!"

"That's a good fellow. Give us a long shrift, if we have to face it, and — die!"

SESSION THIRD

ALONG the Western Road, in the city of Cork, hidden in trees, and separated from the main thoroughfare by a little garden, where gay tulips and mild narcissi hid in the spring-time, and gorgeous geraniums and begonias flaunted their splendours from June to October, was the modest residence of Professor Sedgwick. It was in the immediate vicinity of the Queen's College, where he taught Philology to a limited number of young men; and the storied Lee separated it from the lofty heights of Sunday's Well, crowned by the noble pile of buildings known as St. Vincent's Church and Presbytery. Professor Sedgwick was a bachelor, and seemed likely to continue so, his human affections being centred on his work, and such intellectual pleasures as were connected with it. He was now in middle age. His thick hair was streaked with gray. His pointed beard was "sable-silvered." His mode of speaking was pleasant, because it was always earnest, and not subdued to that dull monotone of supercilious seriousness which some cultured people affect in our day. His manner was equally earnest and affable, which led unthinking and flippant people to presume a little and take liberties. They generally suffered, and had reason to remember, but not to repeat, the experiment. His little *ménage* was humble, as became a solitary scholar, but there was no lack of comfort. His fine collection of books supplied elegance. His guests had come up from Queenstown with prompt alacrity. He was greatly pleased. The absence of even one would have hurt him.

"Look you, Mr. Hunt," he said abruptly, having taken their portfolios from the ladies, and placed them near the piano, "the words of that tragic poem have been haunting me all the week. They followed me everywhere, but especially in my

class work, where I had to deal with all the horrors of the old Greek drama. Do you know it has struck me more than once that we, in our modern civilisation, are sweeping around unconsciously to the old Greek spirit, beautifying life as well as we can, but yet mournfully looking out upon the little drama in a tragic and sombre manner?"

"Why, Professor," said Miss Hope, "I have always understood that the Greek spirit was the spirit of joyousness and delight at the very fact of existence — that they had perfect health in body and mind, followed Nature, and enjoyed all the pleasure that children have in living. I also thought that all our moderns want is to exchange what they consider the sombre creed of Christianity for the happy naturalness of the Greek ideal, and the worship of the great god, Pan."

It was the first time Hester Hope ventured on so long a sentence, her remarks hitherto having been very brief, though pointed. But she had been reading about the New Spirit that was creeping in everywhere, and she bitterly resented it. She could conceive nothing grander than the ideals of her own Church, just as she felt that the Church's ethics were the only salvation for bewildered humanity.

The Professor looked at her with a little surprise. It was a pleased surprise. He felt, like all generous thinkers, that there was some implied flattery in challenging him about such serious questions on his own ground.

"That is quite true, Miss Hope," he said. "But our modern hedonists are resting on a false assumption — namely, that the old Greek and Pagan life was essentially a joyous one. I cannot find any trace of it in history, nor in the old Greek writings. In fact, I am led to think that things were then much as they are now. The same pleasures and the same pains; more attention, perhaps, to physical health and beauty, no pity for deformity. But the same evils that are haunting our civilisation dogged the footsteps of the Greek; and the same questions that are tormenting such thinkers as Emerson, Carlyle, or Herbert Spencer agonised the mind of Plato."

"And they had not our freedom," said Mr. Hunt.

"No," said the Professor. "Human life was held cheaper then than now; and a man's freedom was at the mercy of an archon, and his life was at the mercy of his slave."

"Then, you think," said Miss Fraser, "that life is not progressing backwards, as Mr. Hunt supposed?"

"Pardon me, Miss Fraser," said the young man, with the usual smile playing about his lips, "I do not think I ever advanced that opinion."

"But your poem, or preachment —?" she said.

"Was not mine. I put the words in the mouth of a cynic; and I thought I answered them. But, if not, permit me now to say that I believe the great world is moving onwards and upwards; that life was never better or dearer; and that we have no need to envy any of the centuries that have gone into the gulf of eternity. But — I beg pardon," he said, turning to Miss Hope, who seemed anxious to say something.

"No, no, no!" she said. "Go on, Mr. Hunt. I quite agree so far."

"I was just about to say that I think we have not the capacity, nor the means, for pleasure enjoyed by the ancient Greeks. They understood life better. They had a glorious climate, types of consummate loveliness before them, and — no dread of death."

"Nor hope of immortality?" said Father Dillon.

"True. But the problem of existence did not trouble them as it worries us. Their great men studied it as a thesis, no more. The multitude never looked beyond the grave. This life was enough for them. And social questions they left to their philosophers and rulers. A little bread and olives and the Isthmian games were enough for them. Man was made to live and be happy. That was all!"

"Why, there's the Wagnerian conception all over again," said the Professor. "Life created for pleasure, and art consecrated to hedonism — that's all!"

Miss Hope didn't like the tone of the debate. She bit her lips, and murmured, as if speaking to herself:

"I think we are made for more than pleasure, somehow. At least, I never gratify myself, but I feel dissatisfied."

"Then," said Mr. Hunt, "are we to conclude, Miss Hope, that you receive no pleasure from our little gatherings; or that, receiving such pleasure, you go away disgusted?"

The girl flushed up. In a moment she recollected herself, crushed down her Celtic emotion, and said, somewhat coldly:

"I should never attend these meetings if I didn't hope to receive more profit than pleasure from them."

Father Dillon looked pleased. It was the expression of his own idea. But the young Englishman, unabashed, said gently:

"You open up, as usual, Miss Hope, great vistas of thought by one magic word. Now, as someone quoted Richard Wagner, — was it myself? No matter. The sum and source of all his inspiration was that man was made to be happy, and that Art was the handmaiden who was to supply the happiness."

"Quite so!" said Miss Hope. "But this is only repeating the question — Is happiness to be found in mere emotion, and not in the intellect? And, as a corollary, does Art stop there in enkindling that emotion, which is evanescent, and go no further?"

"That was his idea clearly. I do not say he was right. But I am sure all his Art rested on that presumption."

"Then, there was nothing didactic in his dramas?"

"Absolutely nothing! His idea was — the unification of all the arts to please the little god of this planet. And you notice that he summoned all the arts to the aid of music, which, again, was always dramatic. He constructed his own theatre on his own architectural lines, which were really grand; he threw across the stage scenes of surpassing magnificence, absolutely unequalled in ancient or modern times. I do not know how he consulted the sense of taste; but he placed

fountains of perfumed water in his theatre, whose fragrance was only surpassed by their melody."

"But, then —" Miss Hope interrupted, and then became silent.

Mr. Hunt waited politely. The others looked at Miss Hope, who was much embarrassed.

"I was about to say," she continued, "that his whole conception of art seems to be very voluptuous and sensual. He must have been a pupil of Goethe's."

"That's an excellent guess, or a clever induction," said the Professor admiringly. "But it also relieves Wagner from the charge of being totally a hedonist in his art. For, just as Goethe, in his chief poem, preaches the mighty doctrine of Redemption — the doctrine that seems to lie at the root of all dramatic poetry, so Wagner, in his chief work, also introduces that doctrine, and makes it the *Leitmotif* of the opera."

"I cannot quite remember," said Mr. Hunt, humbly. "You refer to?"

"*Parsifal*," said the Professor. "You see there, mingled with all kinds of earthly abominations, the doctrine of Divine Redemption or the self-surrender of one soul for the sake of another."

"Yes, and strange to say," exclaimed Miss Fraser, "the whole drama appears to be an adaptation of the Catholic Mass. I mean, of course, in its dramatic conception and its ceremonial. I don't know what the central dogma of the Mass is."

There was a curious silence for a few moments, owing to that sensitiveness — is it morbid? — with which Catholics seem to avoid all questions touching religion. Then Miss Hope said briefly:

"Redemption! The Priest, the Victim, the Immolation for one who is Beloved!"

She flushed a little, and was silent. The other co-religionists felt equally embarrassed. Mr. Hunt said:

"I have never been at a Catholic Mass; but I know it seems to have haunted in some mysterious manner the brains of all

thinkers. Even Carlyle, who hated Catholicism, with all the venom of his narrow Calvinistic soul, did admit that, amidst all the fluctuations of human history, intellectual, ecclesiastical, or other, the Mass seemed to be the one thing unchangeable and enduring."

"It enters into all poetry," said Miss Hope, who was pleased, yet nervous at the turn the conversation had taken. "In Scott, Coleridge, Shakespeare, Tennyson, — in every poet who has touched the past, and even in Carlyle himself, who was a greater poet than he knew, the Mass seems to come uppermost as the great central drama of humanity."

"He seemed to think somehow," said Mr. Hunt, "that the modern Mass was not the same as that of the Middle Ages. I think he calls it a simulacrum, or some other choice expletive!"

"That was his profound ignorance," said the Professor. "There is not the slightest difference between Mass as it is said yonder in St. Vincent's and as it was said in Fountains' or Melrose. But Carlyle was an ignorant man, with a wonderful affectation of omniscience, and a very absurd and conceited contempt for everything modern, except — a German trooper!"

"But Mr. Hunt has also a great contempt for this convict-hulk —" said Miss Hope, maliciously.

"Now, now, that's unkind," said Reginald Hunt. "I thought I disclaimed all that. But let us turn to music, Father Dillon. May I presume to ask Mrs. Holden or Mrs. Skelton to play something sacred this evening — I mean some piece of Mass-music, Palæstrina, or —?"

Mrs. Holden shook her head at Palæstrina, but offered to play the *Gloria* from Mozart's Twelfth Mass.

It would be hard to say if this composition gave Mr. Hunt, or Professor Sedgwick, or Miss Fraser, an adequate conception of the solemnity of the Mass, or whether Gounod's *Ave Maria*, beautiful as it is, which Mrs. Holden sang immediately after, predisposed them to prayer. But, at least, it is certain that

no tears fell into their tea-cups; and that all agreed they had spent a delightful evening.

As they were going to the train, Mr. Hunt said to Hester Hope:

"I am much interested in what we have been speaking about this evening. I intend to study 'Parsifal' when I get home. Could you let me have a Catholic prayer-book, or —?"

Somehow the connection of "Parsifal" and the Holy Sacrifice seemed to shock the Catholic sensibility of the girl. She answered:

"I can let you have a Catholic prayer-book, Mr. Hunt, with pleasure. But please get out of your mind the idea that there is the least affinity between the Mass and 'Parsifal.' The idea is absolutely grotesque, and even profane."

"Pardon me," he said. "I didn't understand."

SESSION FOURTH

"Now, Doctor," said Father Dillon, as he flung himself into a deep armchair at Dr. Holden's, where the fourth Session was being held, "you and Mr. Skelton have done nothing yet for our little conferences. We have no notion of letting you off so easily. Everyone must do something, sing a song, tell a story, or join a debate, or read an original paper, poem or essay."

"Well, you see, ladies and gentlemen," said Dr. Holden, "I have already explained to Father Dillon that we doctors cannot really become poets, essayists or debaters, without sacrificing the interests of our profession. You see, priests can be anything they like — social reformers, educationists, athletes, mechanical inventors, musical composers, etc., and somehow, it seems to add to their prestige with the faithful. But, if it were known that I wrote a poem, or sang a song, everyone of my patients would go over to Dr. Jones."

"But, my dear fellow," said Father Dillon, who was very intimate with the doctor (the latter had driven a knife through him once in a merciful way), "we don't want to compromise you with the public. Let us hear something in your own department."

"Medicine?" shouted the doctor.

"Certainly," said the priest. "Why should you keep it a secret science, as the alchemists of the Middle Ages? Everything is thrown open now. There's no use in your cabalistic signs, or your head-shakings. We shall — we must know all."

"I suppose," said the doctor, sarcastically, "the ladies are very much interested in the diagnosis and treatment of the gout?"

They did not seem disposed to admit the impeachment.

The word seemed to imply middle age and an illicit acquaintance with port wine.

"I am," said the Professor, boldly. "I have a hand-shaking, or rather foot-shaking, acquaintance with the fellow. The ladies may know his first and second cousins, such as neuralgia, sciatica, etc., but I know the fellow himself; and he doesn't improve on acquaintance. It is a long time now, since I got introduced to him. I have been obliged to turn him out of doors a hundred times, but he's an insolent fellow, and persists in returning. There's one consolation about the matter — that he seems to have only rich or distinguished friends. In fact, he seems capable of conferring a patent of nobility, and he seems on visiting terms with all geniuses."

"And yet you expelled him? — or tried?" said the doctor.

"A happy correction!" said the Professor. "I tried. I douched him with cataracts of salicylate of soda; I deluged him with iodide of potassium; I pelted him with all the tabloids in the patent medicine advertisements throughout the world; I coaxed him with poisonous pastilles; and I bombarded him with bullets of soluroi; but in vain. Back the fellow came, knocked, and had to be admitted. Doctor, I feel sure the profession know nothing about the fellow. I have a theory of my own!"

"As to your first assertion," said the doctor, in a drawling, but humble manner, "I quite agree with you. The faculty is in complete ignorance of the nature and formation of gout. We can put our finger on the whole of the microbe family — fevers, diphtheria, phthisis, pneumonia —"

"Has pneumonia a specific microbe?" asked Miss Fraser. "I suffered from it once. I had no idea it was a parasitic disease."

"It is," said Dr. Holden. "It has its own specific microbe, the pneumo-coccus, shaped like an ancient M, or two D's placed back to back. The strange thing is, that in both the milder and more virulent or infectious form of the disease, the microbe remains the same. Why it should be perfectly

innocuous to all but the patient in one case, and fatally infectious in others, so as even to cause an epidemic, no one has yet ascertained. But, to come back to the doctor's question. No one as yet has discovered the microbe of gout, because — it never existed."

"And the disease is purely mechanical, or dynamic?" said the Professor.

"Purely. But you had a theory, Professor?"

"Yes. I am quite aware it is rash to form one; still more temerarious to explain it —"

"Go on," said the doctor. "We won't put you on the rack. I won't answer for Father Dillon, if you touch his department, but I won't burn you at the stake."

"Well," said the Professor, smiling. "I am aware that I am making myself slightly ridiculous; but, as Father Dillon says, everything is now open to inquisition and experiment. I am quite convinced from the experiments that have been made on this *corpus vile* of mine, that gout, in its acute form, is the inflammation raised by the excessive vitality and general cussedness of the phagocytes in the blood; in its chronic form of rheumatic deposits it is simply the salts of lime, extracted from the blood by these phagocytes and dropped into the corners of the system when they die."

The doctor sat up, and began to wrinkle his forehead. The Professor continued:

"There is a perfect analogy between the formation of sea-shells and limestone, and gouty deposits. The minute animalculæ of the sea extract in some mysterious manner salts of lime from the ocean, build it up into a gorgeous sea-palace, painted with all the tints of the rainbow, weave it and twist it into voluted forms, that mock all human art. Then, the work completed, the little artist dies, and the deserted sea-palace, or sea-shell, is flung on the sands, thence to be ground and converted into lime, thence to build human palaces or cathedrals. Now, exactly in the same way, your phagocyte, a most industrious and militant subject, calmly extracts salts

of lime from *his* ocean, that is the swift and turbid currents of the blood that swishes through the canals of the human system, amalgamates them, develops in consequence furious vitality, that is, irritability, sets up inflammation in the system, which we call acute gout. Then, surfeited with lime and mischief, he dies, or is killed, the pulp of his little body decomposes and is absorbed, and the little nodule of lime is swept along and dropped into the angles of the system, where the current runs slowly, and is unable to hold these minute particles in solution. These are the gouty nodosities on the fingers, or in the ears — the chalk deposits, which we call rheumatism."

"Absurd! A tissue of absurdities," said the doctor. "What led you to such a ridiculous assumption?"

"Doctor!" said Father Dillon, in a warning voice.

"But it is absurd!" said the doctor. "Where is the need of supposing the intervention of bacteria or animalculæ, when we have the dynamic theory of uric acid forming itself in the blood?"

"What forms uric acid?" said the Professor mildly.

"We don't know," said the doctor. "I admit that."

"Why is it sometimes acute in its action, and sometimes chronic?"

"There again! It is owing, of course, to the condition of the patient."

"Why does colchicum give instantaneous relief from all inflammatory symptoms, whilst it leaves the uric acid, or salts of lime, untouched, or undiminished, in the system?"

"Is that so?" said the doctor, waiving for the first time his assumption of medical infallibility.

"It is," said the Professor. "It is easy to understand how a poison can act instantaneously on an organism such as I suppose. It is not easy to explain how it can act instantaneously on dead matter without breaking it up, or dissolving it. But it only shows the unity of things, and how essentially we belong to the universe. It is this same salts of lime that

agonises my hand, that builds yonder cathedral; just as it is my breath that drives the Etruria across the Atlantic."

Now, the *Sunetoi*, as I have said, were very polite, and, as the essence of politeness is charity, they covered the doctor's angry retreat by a buzz of general conversation. There was a feeling that the doctor had lost temper, and therefore, the mimic battle. Swiftly, too, he realised the same fact; and then came the more humiliating reminder: And in my own house!

"Professor," he said humbly, "I'll take a note of what you have said. It is highly original. If there's anything in it, the κῶδος shall be yours. I'll not allow any pirate of the profession to claim it. But I fear I've not got my temper under control this week. I've had some sleepless nights."

"Have you been out during the week?" asked Father Dillon. Priests and doctors have a wonderful sympathy with each other on one subject — the night call.

"Yes," said the doctor. "In fact I've been away from home; and look! shall I tell it, I wonder?"

"Certainly," said the *Sunetoi*.

"There, I knew the doctor had a story," said Father Dillon. "I knew it by his preoccupation. Out with it, doctor!"

"I have some doubts whether I ought to tell it in mixed company," said the Doctor. "But we are all friends, and our motto is — *Toleration*. All right! I'll begin. You can never know the persons of whom I am speaking."

He reflected for a moment, and then said:

"I was called away from home by a telegram that lay upon my study table the evening we spent with the Professor. It was from an old college friend. It said briefly: '*Alice in great danger. Come if you possibly can.*' It was too late to start then. The night mail had gone out. I packed my portmanteau, put in a few surgical instruments, ordered breakfast at seven, and at eight o'clock I was on my way. The train was slow to Mallow. There I caught a fast train, which sped us on rapidly. At Ballybrophy we stopped, and I changed

for a side line. It was evening when I reached the little station at S——. The doctor's trap was waiting for me. It was night when we drew up at his house in the village street.

"I don't know whether any of you have experienced the singular feeling that comes down on one who is visiting a house of sickness, or sorrow, or shame. Instead of the bright, cheery welcome of ordinary times, there is silence and sad faces, and lowered lamps and light footfalls. I confess my heart sank as I entered my friend's house, and was shown into the drawing-room on the left. A lamp — a tall, standard lamp, was lighting, but the wick was lowered, and the light was shaded. Everything was just as *she* left them — would it be for ever? The music was open on *her* piano, *her* work was lying on *her* writing-desk; *her* last book was lying open on the table. Everything was neat and sweet, and denoted order and elegance. And she — ?

"In a few moments my friend came in, and advanced towards me. I wouldn't have known him. We had been students at the 'Queen's' together; we had occupied the same dingy diggings; abused the same old lodging-keeper for stealing our bacon and butter; read for economy's sake the same treatises; studied the same old bones; sowed our wild oats together; and then we parted. He had married late in life, and it was only then I met him again after a long separation. His young wife — he was old enough to be her father — was the brightest, cheeriest type of Irish girl I had ever seen. The day of his marriage he had a few white hairs in his hair and beard, but he looked a type of manly strength and beauty. And now — ? I would have passed by without recognition, had I met him in the public street, this gaunt, cadaverous, unkempt, unshaven creature. A week of sorrow had done the work of years.

"He shook hands silently. I murmured something. He went over, leaned his arm on the mantelpiece, his head on his arm, and sobbed as if his heart would break. I said nothing.

He calmed down. 'Alice is very bad,' he said. 'Double pneumonia. This is the fifth day. She is awfully weak.'

"Any complications?' I asked.

"No, a little pleurisy, but nothing else. But the bases of both lungs are engaged.'

"Of course you've got nurses?'

"Yes! The best I could get down from Dublin. I was about to wire for ——' (mentioning a great medical swell), 'but I thought of you.'

"I'm complimented, old man,' I said. 'And now, look here! I'm not going to talk nonsense to you about cheering up, etc., but, you know, your wife has one thing which you and I have not, that is, youth and strength. And so long as the heart holds, she is sure to weather through. How did it all happen?'

"The usual way. That infernal influenza, of course. She had run down a good deal. Then, Thursday turned out fine. She insisted on my driving her to the country dispensary. It was all right until we turned from Kilmeny Cross, where a bitter north wind blew in our faces. That evening there were the usual rigours, and I knew what it was.'

"Well, you took it in time, however.'

"I did. But — will you have some supper now; or would you like to see Alice first?'

"Yes. I shall see her. Then we can talk things over.'

"He led the way upstairs into her room. The nurse was there. The lamp was brought down very low. I looked at the chart. The temperature had leaped up to 105°, then come down, and was now steady at 103°, running down by two degrees in the morning. Heart pulsations, 120. The poor girl lay perfectly still. She had had no sleep since she took ill; and there was slight delirium.

"Dr. Holden has come to see you, Alice,' her husband whispered. 'Won't you speak to him?'

"She tried to speak, but her tongue was like a piece of painted wood in her mouth.

“‘I must be very bad,’ she whispered. ‘I thought I was at home. Could you ask these people to go away? I can’t stand their staring at me.’

“He turned aside, weeping. She continued staring before her.

“‘Will you examine the lungs?’ the nurse whispered.

“‘No,’ I said. ‘You’re keeping the poultices on steadily?’

“‘Yes. Every three hours.’

“‘And she’s taking nourishment well?’

“‘Yes. All she wants is sleep. The sleepless nights are killing her.’

“I touched the doctor’s arm, and we went downstairs.

“‘There seems no danger as yet,’ I said, ‘but you must give her some sulfonal to-night. All looks well.’

“He jumped up in agony.

“‘All’s not well!’ he cried, walking up and down the room. ‘There’s one thing wanting. How can I ever be forgiven, if anything happens?’

“I thought this meant something domestic and delicate, and I said nothing.

“He walked up and down the room in great agitation. Then he stopped suddenly.

“‘Holden,’ he said, ‘is it too late — I mean, would it do any harm if I called in the priest to see Alice?’

“I said, in the usual professional manner: ‘Of course, it is not too late. But anything that would excite or disturb her now might have bad consequences.’

“‘That’s just what these — nurses have been saying from the beginning,’ he replied. ‘And now, am I to stand by, and see her pass out of life without confession or Extreme Unction?’

“I was never so surprised. He wasn’t a bad fellow, but religion wasn’t his strong point. And I even knew he was careless about all religious observances.

“‘Alice,’ I said, ‘has been always, I believe, a good —’

“‘Good?’ he cried in agony. ‘God never created better.

That's why I am tormented now. I can't bear the thought, the suspicion, that her soul might be lost; and that — that — we might never meet again. And all — my fault, my fault! Say, Holden, shall I send over for Father Hayes? He's only across the way?'

"I hardly knew what to answer. The patient was delirious, yet had intervals of reason, and I knew enough about my religion to understand that she could receive the last sacraments. But, undoubtedly, the visit of a priest would affect her seriously, and the crisis of the malady was at hand.

"'Look here, Holden,' he cried, seeing that I was hesitating, 'it comes to this. If Alice dies without sacraments, I shall certainly destroy myself. 'Twill drive me mad!'

"'This should have been thought of,' I said, 'in the beginning of her malady, before her strength had run down. Now, 'tis critical enough!'

"'Of course,' he said. 'And if I were attending a poor devil over there in the bog, I'd say at once — have the priest! But you see, these nurses were too professional; and they were warning, night and day, to avoid excitement, avoid excitement. And now, my God, it may be too late!'

"'Well, of course, you'll get hauled over the coals,' I said —

"But he fiercely interrupted me.

"'Over the coals?' he said. 'I don't care a damn for all the abuse I shall get. What I want is to have her soul saved. If she dies without the priest, I shall certainly lose my reason!'

"'Then call him in,' I said. 'What kind of fellow is Hayes?'

"'Very good. Very quiet and gentle.'

"'Call him in, then! I'll coach him up how to approach the patient.'"

"That was very good of you," said Father Dillon, interfering, "as if a priest didn't know his duty as well as a Doctor!"

"Yes, my dear man," said Dr. Holden, "but there are priests and priests. Now, a rough, over-zealous, fussy priest might do awful mischief there. But, however, Father Hayes

was called in. He was a middle-aged, stooped, pale-faced, calm clergyman. The doctor went out for a moment. The priest came over, and shook my hand warmly. 'I have to thank you for this,' he said. 'I've spent an anxious week about this poor lady. I called every day, and hinted very broadly that poor Mrs. —— should have confession at least. But they put me off. It is late enough; but I hope all will be well. Has she retained her senses?'

"‘She wanders a little,’ I replied. ‘There is lack of blood to the brain, and she becomes slightly delirious at times; but I shall give her a tonic now, and then the brain will act all right.’

"‘God bless you!’ the poor man said, as if I had any credit for it.

"All then was arranged. We injected a little strychnine, which steadied the heart, and when all was right, we sent Father Hayes upstairs. In a few moments the nurse came down. The doctor rushed out.

"‘How did she receive Father Hayes? Did she know him?’

"‘Oh, yes,’ said the nurse, never losing her professional coolness, ‘she appeared rather pleased.’

"‘Thank God!’ he said, coming in, and closing the door. ‘I don’t care what happens now.’

"He looked almost young again.

"‘Now, Holden,’ he said, just like a schoolboy who has got a holiday, ‘tuck in! Here is cold chicken and ham, and tongue. Will you have some tea, or whiskey?’

"‘I vote for whiskey,’ I said. The contagion of the fellow’s new-born delight affected me. ‘But do you know, you surprise me? I never gave you credit for much religion.’

"‘And you were right,’ he said. ‘But, somehow, the whole reality has flashed upon me now. I’m like the man in the Gospel: “I only know that I was blind, and now I see.” You go on with your supper, and I’ll tell you all.’

"He stopped for a moment, as if doubtful whether he was justified in making the revelation. Then he went on:

“‘You know me, Holden, better than any one else. You knew me in our college days, and I haven’t changed much. I haven’t been too bad. Father Hayes finds it hard sometimes to get me to the Easter Duty, but I never lost Mass, nor eat meat on Friday. I wasn’t irreligious, nor anti-religious, but I was unreligious. Well, when I married, Alice brought me to for a time. I’d do anything for her, even to saying long prayers. But, you know, she was not only pious, but deucedly well-read. She was educated by the Ursulines, and was quite up to date. Well, things went well for a good while. Then, I noticed she began to put awkward questions about biology and all that sort of thing. And I entered into the matter; and, God is my witness, without the least notion of upsetting her faith, and, indeed, without thinking such a thing possible, I often spoke too freely on these matters, and threw out hints that without, in the world, the best thinkers were dead against us, and that, in fact, the mystery of things was insoluble. Gradually, I saw a falling away on her part from her religious practices. She used at first spend an hour or two in the chapel every Saturday, decorating the altar. She gave it up. She used to go to Confession and Communion every week. She then put it off for a month, and then for months. She was very eager in asking questions about medical matters, and sometimes I noticed that certain books, such as Bain’s *Mind and Body*, and these French treatises on Nerve Troubles, were displaced on my shelves. You know, Holden, what a universe of crime and madness these books reveal. Then, I noticed that she sometimes spoke with a little graceful contempt of her old preceptors; and then, after a long time, she began to criticise priests. Now, all this chimed in with my own wretched ideas, and she knew it. And, therefore, I could not chide her. But deep down in my heart I was troubled. If God should send me children, I thought, what kind of training shall their young minds get here? Yet, all that time, she was more winning and lovable than ever. And when she said smart and witty things, but

slightly profane, I laughed. Bit by bit, I saw every trace of religious feeling wear away. One day I would see a religious picture displaced by some artistic, but semi-pagan photogravure. Then, little busts would appear on the mantelpiece, of some modern agnostic. To shorten the narrative, our home had become *fin-de-siècle*, cultured, advanced, literary, and God had been expelled, when, suddenly, the great gulf yawned beneath our feet. You see it all now. Alice has not been to Confession for more than a year. Her faith has been undermined. Were she to die in this illness, without making her peace with God, there was only one fate before her. My own poor faith in God, and Hell, and Eternity has woke up, with convulsive remorse. You can understand now what tortures I have endured. All the arguments I have ever read against Christianity, all the doubts I entertained, have been blown away, and the awful truths have risen up from the gulf before me in all their terrible significance. If it pleases God to spare Alice to me, this house will become His Temple again, and for ever.'

"I went on with the supper, keenly alive, however, to all that he was saying. He thought he had not been emphatic enough in his self-condemnation, and he added, after a pause:

"'You know, Holden, what we fellows feel when we lose a case by some bad bungling. It is horrible. But what is that to the conviction that one has destroyed a human soul? Here is the terrible thought that has been haunting me: Alice will die; Alice will be lost to God for ever; you have been the cause of her damnation! Nothing more awful could torment the human mind!'

"After half-an-hour, the priest came down the stairs, and was shown into the dining-room, where we sat. A placid smile was in his eyes, and hovered around his mouth. He was folding his purple stole around his ritual. He declined all refreshments, and then my friend said:

"'Well?'

"'Your wife seems much more at rest and happier,' said

the priest. 'I think her recovery will be now very much helped.'

"'You have done everything?' said the doctor, anxiously.

"'Everything,' said the priest, smiling. 'There was difficulty in getting the poor mouth to take the Viaticum; but we managed.'

"'And — and she made no objection?'

"'Not the slightest. She was very grateful.'

"'Thanks be to the great God!' said the doctor.

"Then he bent his head down between his knees; and we heard him sobbing, and saw his whole frame shaken by the emotion.

"Before retiring, we paid a short visit to the sick room. The patient lay back on her pillows, apparently restful and happy. Her husband stole over, bent down, and said something. But the rest will not bear being told.

"Next morning, her temperature had run down to 99°.

"'She had a good night,' said the nurse. 'A little restless, but no delirium.'

"'The sulfonal,' I whispered.

"'Ye — es!' said the doctor, incredulously.

"He wished that I should examine the lungs. The congestion was beginning to resolve rapidly; the crisis was at hand. If we could keep up her strength, all would be well. There were three anxious days. Then I felt all danger was past, and came home. I had a letter this morning. I think all is right now. Probably, I shouldn't have told the story, but, you see, Father Dillon would persist. Now, we must have some music."

During that performance, Mr. Hunt, who had been following the narrative with interest, whispered to Hester Hope:

"What a magnificently dramatic scene! Ibsen would have constructed a telling tragedy there!"

He was surprised that Miss Hope took the suggestion rather coldly. He assumed that she had not heard of Ibsen.

"It is so like, I mean, in the *motif* that seems to underlie

all Ibsen's dramas — guilt, confession, redemption. All his characters have suffered shipwreck of faith, or morals, or fortune or health, just like these two creations of Dr. Holden's —"

"But, Mr. Hunt, you are mistaken. What the doctor told is not fiction, but fact. Surely, you don't suppose he invented such a pathetic story?"

"*N'importe!*" said Mr. Hunt. "Fact or fiction, it is all the same. I only consider it as far as it would contribute to Art — as far as it would permit itself to be dramatised. And really, it seems to me admirably adapted to — scenes! Act I. — The young girl in her convent school, or walking the convent grounds with the staid and placid sisters; then meeting the grave, middle-aged man, who had had a history. Act II. — Her devotion, placing those flowers before the altar, and I presume praying with them, and offering the incense of her heart with the incense of their breath. Act III. — The Revelation — the sceptical *causeries* between husband and wife, the surreptitious taking and reading of fatal books, the decay of religious feeling. The sudden realisation on the husband's part that his wife had lost, or abandoned, her faith. Act IV. — Her sudden illness; his remorse and fear at seeing her soul fluttering above Gehenna; his summoning his friend; the advent of the priest; the crisis. Act V. — Her redemption at the last moment from Death and Hell! Yes! I think I could weave it out into a pretty drama enough —"

"Oh, Mr. Hunt," said Hester, in agony. "How can you speak lightly of such solemn and awful things? You seem to think that everything is created for Art, as you call it —"

"Why, certainly," he said, looking at her anxious face in surprise.

"Oh, Mr. Hunt," she pleaded. "These things are too solemn for such petty purposes. They come to us as a terrible and wholesome lesson, bidding us beware, and warning us to regulate our lives on better lines. They are not childish dramas to be put before the lights for the amusement of a friv-

olous people, or to put money into the pocket of an enterprising poet. They are the warnings of the Holy Spirit, and they only are wise who accept them. You see what an impression the circumstances have made on Dr. Holden, who speaks flippantly, but thinks deeply —”

“You surprise me. I thought the doctor made light of the whole episode.”

“You are far from understanding us, Mr. Hunt,” she said kindly. “We don’t wear our hearts on our sleeves; and we are often misunderstood.”

“Quite so,” he said, after a pause, during which the tinkling of the piano had ceased. “I look to those little meetings as at least illuminative of a train of thought to which I have never been accustomed. How near we are to each other, and yet how far!”

SESSION FIFTH

“I AM the high-priest of Mammon; I am dictator of the universe; I sit in the throne of monarchs; I hold the tassels of the Phrygian cap of Republican liberty. Through my hands passes all the power of earth; I am the aqueduct of all its living waters. I lift my hand, and lo! all the wheels of the world's machinery slowly obey and begin to move; I lift it higher, and wheel and piston, cog and lever, travel swifter and swifter, until the eye sees nought but a vast complexity of motion. My hand falls, and lo! the whirlwind calms down, and gradually all things sink into primitive inertness. I inspire all things, the greatest as well as the basest. The loftiest instincts of humanity are inoperative and paralysed for outer action without my help. It is I that put into force the dreams of saints and philanthropists; it is I that give reality to the gorgeous symbols that flash like sunlit cloudland across the visions of poets. Without me, the poet cannot sing; the artist cannot paint; the Apollo or the Moses lies for ever embedded in the quarries of Sicily or Carrara, without hope of incarnation; nor is there resurrection for the dead in the pages of history, and peace to their weeping manes, unless I lift my hand above their cerements, and command them to be embalmed and placed amongst the mummies of the immortals. Kings sit in my antechamber; and monarchs are the footstool of my feet. Weeping queens are on my threshold; and princes line the walls of my temples. I am as old as the foundations of the earth, when it was poised above chaos; I walked with the Earth-Child, Man, from his infancy, and accompanied him through all the varying phases of childhood, adolescence and manhood. I brought the Gods of Olympus down to earth, and broke up the shields, and blunted the

spears of heroes. It was I who built the temples and altars of the world, and anointed the High Priests of Humanity. And I shall stand over the buried dust of the human race, until the last trump shall sound, and the old order giveth place to the new. Men affect to despise me, whilst they worship me. They abuse me, and adore me. They preach against me, and propitiate me. I stand sponsor over every child that is born; and without me, old Charon will not waft a single soul across his gloomy river. I reverse the motto over the gates of Hell; and above the threshold of my door, I write the legend': ("I won't give you the original, it is a puzzle; but I'll give you the translation:)

“*All hope, ye mortals, if ye enter here!*”

“*Also sprach Zarathustra; So spake Zarathustra; and the world listened and heard.*”

This strange monologue was uttered in the year of our Lord, 189-, in the parlour, or drawing-room, of Miss Hester Hope, B.A., and the Speaker was Robert Skelton, manager of the Cork branch of his bank and general mart of commerce. It was spoken without preface, foreword, or introduction, apology or explanation. The *Sunetoi* were the listeners; and the listeners were paralysed. Only Mrs. Skelton, startled at the sudden development of her spouse, and not knowing what to make of it, peered at him with an anxious look on her face, as if she had some horrible suspicion about drink. But no! His face was as calm as if he were humbugging a country customer, or writing a cheque for himself. Then, a deeper shade of anxiety crossed her features, as she concluded that this was the first symptom of mental degeneration. She looked cautiously around to see how the *Sunetoi* were taking it. But they were all as solemn as the Olympians on their thrones. Only, once or twice, the Professor shuffled in his chair and shivered a little, when Robert pronounced the word “inoperative” with a strong accent on the “a,” and “philanthropists” with a decided inflection on the “o,” when he made

but one syllable out of "manes," and the "Ch" of "Charon" very soft. Once, Mrs. Skelton became so anxious that she whispered: "*Robert!*" but that philosopher went on calmly to the end. He then folded his paper, and said:

"The meaning of all that nonsense is that you can get on somehow without priest, or doctor, or lawyer, or painter, or poet; but you cannot get on without *me!*"

It was just then that Father Dillon was seen whispering and signalling to Mr. Skelton across the room. But Robert was so satisfied he did not take the hint. Then the young priest went over, and taking the paper from the hands of the priest of Mammon, he showed him the other side. The secret was out: but Mr. Skelton was undisturbed.

"No," he said, "I am too old a bird to be caught by chaff. And, besides, I have my directors to consider."

"It was only the other side of the shield, ladies and gentlemen," said Father Dillon, "of which I had already had a glimpse, and which, I think, in all justice Mr. Skelton should have also shewn."

"I leave that to the clergy," said Robert, with a malicious grin. "They are always denouncing this poor old god, Mammon, of mine; and yet I cannot see how ever they can get on without him."

There was a pause of a few seconds, which would not be noticed in English circles, or only considered as a pleasant interlude; but which is very embarrassing among Celts. Then the Professor said:

"I hardly know any subject on which it is more difficult to form a righteous or honourable opinion. I don't know anything on which such and so many opprobrious epithets have been hurled as upon gold; and yet —"

"It is what everyone is seeking," said the doctor, "and which no one can do without. 'Tis the root of all evil; the arch-demon of the world; the cause of war, civil, internecine — war that ends in Waterloo or Sedan, or war that ends in breaking the kitchen-ware. We are all agreed upon that.

Yet, not a man out of a million is independent of it. As Mr. Skelton says, it is the beginning and end of all things."

"I admit," said Father Dillon, "that it is the oil which lubricates the wheels of life, and keeps them working smoothly, without creaking. But I don't see why I should smear myself all over with it, like a South-Sea Islander."

"Yes, but what is the real secret of its fascination?" asked Miss Fraser. "My own countrymen have the reputation of being particularly canny about it; but one would really like to know what the magic consists in. We all agree that gold and silver have no more intrinsic value than the cowries which Samoans or Maoris exchange. Are we really no better than savages? Is a Vanderbilt or a Rockefeller no more to be envied than a dusky chief who carries a belt of seashells or wampum around his waist?"

"Not one inch more," said Father Dillon. "Gold is simply a symbol, like the head of an ox on a piece of leather in past times. It is a power that commands certain utilities — nothing more!"

"Then the importance attributed to it is purely factitious?" said the Professor.

"Undoubtedly," said the priest. "As I have said, it is a power that can purchase certain commodities, necessities, pleasures, or luxuries. Its utility ceases there. If I can do without these things, I am just as wealthy as the man who can command them. Or, if I can get these things for nothing, I am just as wealthy as the man that buys them. Is it not so?"

"Certainly," said the Professor.

"For example," said Father Dillon, "if I were wealthy, I would have the power of buying a diamond ring, a motor car, a carriage and pair, a Vandyke. But, I don't want such things. I am far better without them. So far from being the slightest advantage to me, they would be a decided embarrassment, a burden and a loss. And, the corresponding wealth would be the same."

"Yes, but, Father," said Hester Hope, "consider all the

good you could do, if you had money — all the suffering you could relieve, the hospitals you could build, the educational projects you could advance. I'm sure, if I had money, I'd endow a University, and give poor students the means of advancing in life."

"Ah, yes!" said the priest. "But we are only considering now why people desire wealth. And I'm afraid, Miss Hope, those philanthropic projects that are haunting your mind are not exactly the temptations which wealth holds forth to the many. You are contemplating wealth as a stewardship, and from our standpoint it is no more. But, if you only consider it as a stewardship, and apart from personal advantages, consider what a terrible and burdensome stewardship it is! Imagine what it must be to have the responsibility of disbursing millions, of meeting all kinds of demands, foolish and otherwise, of being an object of hatred and envy to multitudes, who cannot participate in your good fortune. You are there tied in a pillory with a gag of gold around your neck; and you call on gods and men to liberate you."

"I'm quite satisfied," said Robert Skelton. "I'll take the gag if you please, Father Dillon."

"Coming back to the original question," continued Father Dillon, unheeding, "have you ever considered that it is only the lesser and more paltry gifts of life that money can buy? It can only purchase plebeian things — the rags and refuse of the market. It cannot touch the grander and higher things that belong to our nature; nor even the most useful things. It cannot buy health of mind or body; it cannot purchase intellect; it cannot give the poetic, artistic temperament; it cannot negotiate beauty, genius, taste, the æsthetic feeling, the perception of whatever is grand and beautiful in Art or Nature. Think of a multi-millionaire from Chicago entering the studio of a Millais or a Watts, and looking around in a bovine or porcine manner, demanding the price of a portrait, or a symbol. He has no more perception of the beauty or the symbolism of that painting than one of his hogs. He has the

power to purchase a certain thing which he is unable to appreciate from the man who created it and loved it, but is forced by necessity to part with it. Is there any comparison possible between these two men? Is there extant a human being who would rather be Obadiah Hoglarder, Esq., than J. F. Millais?"

"Plenty," said Mr. Skelton. "Hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands!"

"If that be so," continued Father Dillon, "either the education of the masses is a hopeless failure, or humanity is retrograding faster than the grimest of the prophets had foretold."

"Ha! *Rem acu tetigisti*," said the Professor, forgetting himself in the excitement. "The education of the masses is hopelessly neglected. There lies the secret of all modern unrest. The people have never grasped the idea that money, wealth, is the least valuable thing in the world in itself; and that, as Father Dillon says, it can only purchase the baser commodities of life. The higher things are beyond its reach."

"A 'Watts,' or a 'Millais?'" said Mr. Hunt with a smile.

"The purchased 'Watts' and 'Millais' are absolutely useless to the owner," replied the Professor. "He is incapable of appreciating them. They simply fill a vacant spot on his walls."

"But they are his! and they have an intrinsic value?" said Mr. Hunt.

"Nothing has value," replied the Professor, "except in so far as it is perceived. All that your Mr. Hoglarder can feel, or say is, 'That is a "Watts," and that is mine.' The girl who sits at his right hand at dinner, and who could not purchase a proof-engraving of the picture, is the real owner for the two or three hours that she sits there, and drinks in all the symbolic beauty of the painting."

"And which of the two sensations is the more real?" asked Miss Fraser. "The sensation — this is mine; or the sensation — this is beautiful, sublime, suggestive?"

"Undoubtedly the latter," said the Professor, who always

treated Miss Fraser's opinions with great deference. "Even as to duration, you will see the sensation is more valuable. Mr. Hoglarder sees that picture only on the few occasions when he has company, and wants to boast of its possession. At all other times, he would much prefer examining an adipose hog, or totting up his bank account. The girl-artist takes away the picture in her imagination, until it becomes hers; broods over it, recalls every detail of it, until it has stamped itself indelibly on her brain. There it remains, a 'thing of beauty,' not only giving pleasure, but fecund with every noble suggestion, that probably will be the germ of a thousand brilliant thoughts and imaginings, and will find their issue in poem, or essay, or paper, communicating that ideal beauty to others and thus passing on the original glory to mind after mind in endless circles of transition."

"Hoglarder takes a back seat, Skelton," said the doctor.

Mr. Skelton shook his head. He was just in the condition of a boy, to whom it is proved that jam is not good.

"There's another point," said Father Dillon, driving home the truth. "As I ventured to say, the whole artificial estimate of wealth is based on the theological phrase — *pretio æstimabilis*; that is, the money value of things. Now, that may be an excellent standard for commerce, but it is a paltry standard, if we come to consider the intrinsic value of things. Let me illustrate this by two examples. A few days ago I met a poor woman, a tinker's wife, just outside the town. She had a brood of healthy, handsome, dirty children around her. The youngest, who was particularly smutty, and looked a little washy and delicate, was in her arms. 'You must find it hard to find bread for all these?' I said. 'Wisha, begor, that's true for your Reverence,' she replied, 'and the times is bad. I have too many of 'em; but sure God sint 'em.' 'Wouldn't it be a great relief to you now,' I said, 'to get rid of the responsibility of so many children? I can get the little girls into an orphanage, and one of the boys.' Her face fell. She moved away. I could see she was not pleased. 'Come

now,' I said, 'you have too many children. What would you take for that dirty little beggar in your arms?' 'Not all the money in the Bank of Ireland; nor all the goold in the Queen's crown!' she said. 'Would I, Jemmy, alanna? etc.' There now! That woman was poor, yet richer than the richest banks in the world. The other case was that of a poor labourer, who had just got a new cottage in a former mission of mine. From his front door he had a view of a stretch of country, mountain, valley, and woodland forty miles in extent. I was familiar with it under other aspects; but the sudden view from the new standpoint was overwhelming. 'Do you know, John,' I said, 'you have something here for which an American millionaire would give five thousand a year, if he could get it across the Atlantic.' 'You're joking, your Reverence,' he said, 'or else you know where there's a crock of gold buried.' 'Not at all,' I replied, 'I am speaking of the view of that sublime landscape. That mighty mountain over there —' 'Yerra, your Reverence,' he said, 'what good is that ould mountain? Sure, there's not a blade of grass growin' upon it; and the people haven't left a scraw of turf upon it.' He couldn't see my meaning. He was never taught to see anything except as to its value in money. 'There wor some ladies and gintlemen kem on here,' he said, 'the night before last in wan of them new things, motors, — I think they call them, — an' they stopped jest there. 'Oh, look at that mountain!' sez wan lady. 'Look at that patch of goold an' purple.' 'An' oh!' sez another, 'look how that cloud rests there. Isn't it —' somethin' or other, I couldn't make out what she said. An' there they were, codraulin' about that ould mountain, an' thim beeches below there, an' that yalla furze, an' thim thrushes an' things! Do you know, yer Reverence, what I do be thinkin' sometimes? I do be thinkin' that some of thim rich people are rather ijioty in theirselves.' Now that poor man had lived for seventy years, and had never seen those things that gave such rapturous pleasure to the educated and refined. He only thought what was the money

value of that mountain to the man who owned it; of these farms; of these woods, to those who possessed them. He set no value on what *he* possessed in that vast area — the usufruct and interest of all that loveliness and beauty.”

“But, if you argue in that way, Father Dillon,” said Miss Fraser, “what becomes of the ‘magic of property,’ of which we hear so much, and the extraordinary power it has of stimulating the energies of those who would otherwise take only a languid interest in it? Is there not a quickening and energising power even in the words: ‘This is mine?’”

“Sometimes, and only sometimes,” said the priest. “It is well known that many farmers here in Ireland, who were industrious and frugal men whilst they were compelled to pay rent, degenerated into public-house loafers when they became owners of their farms. I know one parish where four of the best farms, bought at very low terms under the Ashbourne Act, had to be sold last year.”

“That is another view,” said the Professor. “We have been arguing about the utility or inutility of wealth. We are drifting now into its abuse. There is one point we seem to be forgetting, namely, that wealth, or power, in our days, is not the same as when it was represented by caves of diamonds in the ‘Arabian Nights,’ or buried treasure, as in ‘The Gold Bug.’ I mean, it is as absurd to rail against wealth as to rail against the vast reservoirs that supply our cities with pure water. An unthinking man would abuse our Corporations as selfish and brutal for possessing vast acres of sweet pure water, until he was shown how that water was carried through twelve inch, six inch, four inch, one inch pipes through every avenue and street in our cities, until at last it finds its way into the kitchen of the poorest man. No Vanderbilt, Rockefeller, or Carnegie can keep his money hoarded in strong rooms to be shovelled up and handled and turned over, like the miser-hoards of olden time. It must leave their hands and percolate through a thousand channels of distribution.”

“I wish St. Francis would come back to life,” said Father

Dillon, "to teach us the value of poverty, and the sweetness of life."

"He would be put in gaol as a tramp," said the Doctor. "And I, as sanitary officer, couldn't allow him to wear these clothes."

"Read 'Fra Alberico' for us," said Miss Hope to Mr. Hunt. "It will throw light on that subject."

The young lady caught herself up in a moment, and blushed furiously. Mrs. Holden whispered to Mrs. Skelton: "I told you so. Isn't it a shame for her, and she knows he is a Protestant?"

"Mr. Hunt was good enough to lend me his album," said Miss Hope, explaining. "I was anxious to see the rest of his midnight visitors, and he sent me the volume. I assure you 'Fra Alberico' just meets the very points we are discussing."

"But surely, Miss Hope," said Reginald Hunt, smiling, "you don't think me so vain as to carry around my album, as a conjuror would take his pack of cards, to cheat the senses of my friends?"

"Very good," said Miss Hope, with some courage. "But a poet laureate should be prepared with an ode or sonnet on commission. However, if — I am presuming too much; but I liked the lines, and I committed them to my notebook. I assure you they are relevant to the subject you are discussing."

"Well, then," said Father Dillon, "if Mr. Hunt doesn't object, you must recite them for us, Miss Hope."

"Yes! but I shall bungle and blunder through them," she said.

"All right! Go ahead! Mr. Hunt can correct you if you fail."

"'Pon my word," said the doctor's wife to her friend, "I don't like this at all. I knew something of this kind would turn up. I wonder Father Dillon doesn't see it."

"Speak to the doctor about it," said Mrs. Skelton, *sotto voce*. "And I'll consult Robert. 'Sh! She's beginning."

And Hester Hope, a little pale with the excitement of the thing, stood up, and stretching forth her arms, as if she was conjuring a ghost, read dramatically:

FRA ALBERICO

I

Just stept down from that canvas! Back to thy canvas again!
What dost thou here in thy frock in the ranks of two-legged men?
Cowled and gowned, like a Lama, awaiting his half-sodden meat;
And there on my polished fender, the hint of thy sandalled feet.

II

Fie, fie, thou monk, come hither, grizzled and worn and wan;
Come like a ghostly shadow out of the days that are gone!
I hear the rumble of Latin; I scent the pungent peat;
I see the choir dim-lighted; and I feel the organ's beat.

III

Go back to your picture, friend! You do very well, I hope,
To puff an adventurous maltster, or a novel kind of soap.
You raise a heretic grin; and the children gasp for breath,
Thou, wraith of the horrors saved them by the virgin, Elizabeth!

IV

What in the world hast thou in common with modern life?
Thy peace, and its pain; thy tranquil smile, and its maddened
 strife?
What dost thou know of progress, the modern bias and bent,
The hoarding pile upon pile — the issues of life well-spent?

V

What? You laboured for Heaven? Avaunt, 'tis a hollow boast!
Never heard of *paté de fois*, or quail upon buttered toast!
Nay, you were well content with a little black bread and milk,
And probably thought and preached your fustian was better than
 silk.

VI

You rose in the murk of midnight to chant your litanies,
You paused in your work to hearken the meaning of mysteries;
You touched the unseen, uplifted your face till the soulfire fell,
You drew the Heavens to earth, and your brothers' souls from
Hell.

VII

You watched the mists on the mountains, curtained fold upon fold;
You mourned the sad sunsettings, while the faint sheep-bells tolled;
You touched with reverent hand the violet sprung from the sod,
And the yellow discs of the daisies spoke to you sweetly of God.

VIII

You shared your bread with the beggar; broke for the tramp your
crust;
Bade him never to fail to place in the Father his trust;
Went back to your cell and Christ, and washed His feet with your
tears,
Remembered the days of old, and recalled the eternal years.

IX

Then o'er your wasted life you mourned, and sadly said,
"Earth has no place too lowly for this poor, sinful head;"
You thought your pallet too soft; your brethren did implore
To lay your pain-racked frame on the barren and ash-strewn floor.

X

Profitless work, my friend, profitless waste of Time!
Better have bent your head, and hearkened the silvery chime,
The musical clank of shekels — finger on cynical nose,
Forgotten your *elëïsons*, and learned the cry: "*Old Cloes!*"

XI

Judged by your wardrobe, my friend, you are not much lacking
there,
Habit of home-spun fustian; tunic of prickly hair.
Headgear, a black zucchetto; footgear, to make one freeze,
Our folks would blush for the bareness, tho' not for delinquencies.

XII

Come now, be honest for once! Tell us no further lies!
You know all now. Were you in the days of your pilgrimage wise?
"Ye have the Prophets and Moses." Is that all you have to tell?
"Lazarus in God's bosom! Dives buried in Hell!"

XIII

Go back to your canvas, friend. Decidedly, you are *de trop*,
We are Agnostics, that is, we simply don't want to know.
And you come here, you ghost of a long dead world, to tell
To a nerve-stricken generation all about Heaven and Hell.

XIV

Pah! Where's that *sal volatile*? Better, that *Eau de Cologne*?
We're faint from the smell of the cere-cloth, now that that monk
has gone.
We really are not nervous. The shadows may come and go.
But the one we can surely spare the best is thine — Fra Alberico!

There was a little laugh at the last stanza, and the Professor said:

"Yes. I suppose the monk is *de trop* in this our age."

"By no means, Professor," said Father Dillon. "'Monks and oaks are immortal,' said Montalembert. Monachism, that is, living alone, or in solitude amongst many, is a necessity of our nature. At all times and in all places — from Jerusalem, from Antioch, from Alexandria, from Rome — men, disgusted with mankind, have fled away to the sands or the mountains, and sought peace."

"And found it?" said the Professor.

"Well, yes! So far as peace is attainable in this world," said the priest.

"But *this* monk, whom Miss Hope has described," said Miss Fraser, "would be surely an anachronism."

"Why, there are some thousands scattered here and there in the cities of civilisation," said the priest.

"But I understood," said Miss Fraser, a little nervously,

"that the monks of to-day were totally unlike the monks who built Furness and Fountains' Abbeys. At least, my countryman, Carlyle, in 'Past and Present' seems to say so rather broadly."

"Oh, yes," said Father Dillon, laughing, "Carlyle could see no good in anything in our age. We were all degenerates. But he shouldn't have written about Catholic subjects. He was quite incapable of understanding them."

"Well," said Miss Fraser, "that is quite intelligible, indeed. But, somehow, I should like to see monks devoting their lives to letters and study. I can imagine how nice it would be to see them over there at Myrtleville or Roche's Point, walking on the cliffs, and exchanging ideas after hours of study."

"A kind of monastic *Sunetoi*?" said the priest, laughing. "Why, that is the great objection against some of our religious orders — that they are contemplative and not active, that they devote themselves to the luxury of selfish study and prayer, and are heedless of the wants of humanity. 'Come out,' the objectors say, 'come out and mingle with your fellow-men. Go down into the slums, raise the fallen, help the weak, and acknowledge a brotherhood with your kind.'"

"That seems reasonable," said Miss Fraser. "What can be said in answer?"

"Why," said Father Dillon, "you have already supplied the answer, Miss Fraser — at least, the natural and æsthetic aspect of it. There is another aspect, into which we will not enter now."

SESSION SIXTH

"I HAVE been exercising my imagination," said Mr. Hunt to Hester Hope, as they walked slowly up along the hill that led to the modest mansion where Miss Fraser had her rooms, "about that last remark made by Father Dillon at our last meeting."

"I forget," said Miss Hope, to whom the remark was commonplace.

"We were speaking about monks living apart and devoted to study, and taking no interest in the affairs of humanity —"

"Oh, did he say that?" said Miss Hope.

"Well, I'm not sure of the exact words, but this was implied. We were speaking of certain — well, select ones, who choose to segregate themselves from ordinary humanity, and give all their time to study and conferential discourses on these studies. This implies an aloofness, an Olympian disdain for ordinary mortals, which, pardon me, I have always considered a crime against humanity."

"I can never explain," said Miss Hope, "and you could never understand."

"I shall promise to be a patient pupil," he said, humbly. "I am very young; but not so young as to be unconscious of my need for light."

"But, you see," said Miss Hope, "this brings us back to religion; and we Catholics have a decided distaste to introducing religion into ordinary conversation."

"Why, may I ask?"

"Well, because it seems unbecoming, and because it seems like tampering with the convictions of others, and because it seems like bringing down holy things into the marketplace; and because —"

"But can we not discuss the matter as a purely logical or conversational subject, apart altogether from its innate sanctity?"

"No! That's just what we object to."

"But suppose a soul is seeking for light —"

"Then we send him to the light-givers."

"The priests?"

"Yes."

He said no more then. But it was the subject that Miss Fraser had adopted for treatment that night in her own home, whither in the order of things the *Sunetoi* had come.

"On one point or principle I presume we are agreed," read Miss Fraser, "that is, that each individual is bound to seek after that which is greatest or most perfect. This cannot be called an instinct of nature, because the natural instincts seem to call the other way, and to invite to selfish pleasures or profits, which are not the ideal good. It must come from some intuitive perception of some obscure principle, dimly revealed, and studiously stifled, yet admitted by all, *savant* or stupid, philosopher or man in the street, to be the most exalted, and at the same time, peremptory duty that falls to the lot of humanity. As I have said, the principle, or intuition, is stifled often. It is never denied. The saint practises it; but the galley slave or convict admits it. Men repudiate it in act; never *ex professo*, or in words. And that principle is, that it is better to labour for others than for one's self; that it is noble to sacrifice our own interest for our neighbours; and that the culmination of the sacrifice is entire Renunciation. Few attain that height, like Siddartha in 'The Light of Asia;' all are bound to labour for it. And a man's success in life is to be measured, not by what he has succeeded in accomplishing for his own personal well-being, but by what he has succeeded in accomplishing for humanity; and his failure is not to be calculated by his personal reverses, or losses, but by what he has refused to effect for the common weal. As I have said, the mighty privilege of being a bene-

factor to humanity is reserved for the few. But, the catastrophe that is irremediable comes only when an individual or a nation repudiates the principle, and declares in the words of the rebels against the Highest Benevolence, '*I will not serve!*' Let us picture the oncoming, the preludes, the symptoms that precede such a catastrophe in the individual soul. I believe that, no matter how imperfect our systems of education may be, particularly in the moral, or ethical training of the young, that first great elementary principle is not often neglected. A greedy child is an abomination. A too-ambitious lad is never popular; and whilst lawful ambition is stimulated by prizes, I think we shall find that the encouragement to succeed at the cost of others is always modified by the advice — 'Take your honours meekly!' And, if a boy, conscious of his intellectual supremacy over his class-fellows should, in a moment of heroic self-abnegation, resign his precedence to an inferior competitor, there might be chagrin amongst his friends, but at least, the heroism will be acknowledged. I am fully aware that it might also be regarded as an indication of some occult infirmity of character; but, the world is not gone so far wrong that it is unable to understand and appreciate the sacrifice.

"But, as men advance in life, they begin to perceive that the worship of this virtue, self-abnegation, is merely lip-worship; and that when the fires of youth die down, and the colder and more ungenerous light of experience lights up the narrowing avenues of life, there are few who do not perceive that the augurs and prophets are smiling at each other whilst examining for omens and signs. Yes, alas! too soon the conviction forces itself on the generous mind that to speak of Renunciation is a mere conventionalism — a catchword of hypocrisy to most men, whose real life-principle and battle-cry, sounded deep down in their hearts, of course, and never permitted to rise to the lips, or break into utterance is, verily, 'the race is to the swift and the battle to the strong!' And the competitors are many, and the prizes are but few. And he leaps

into the arena. He has joined the herd. Sometimes, perhaps, out of the heat and smoke of the struggle he hears, as in a dream, of some deed of self-abnegation and renunciation — of young men abandoning their professions to go down into Whitechapel slums to rescue the fallen, and lift up the trampled. Sometimes a paragraph catches his eye, outside the crowded columns of stocks and shares and sporting events in the daily paper, telling of young apostles rising up from the Universities or *Lycées* of the country and going forth to redeem the heathen. There is mayhap a momentary prick of conscience, a momentary pang of regret, and back he plunges into the fight again. Or, he takes up some Evangel of Light — some interpretation of the hidden voice, reads it, weighs it, hearkens to its truth, admits its nobility of phrase and precept. But, he looks around. The mighty world is unheeding. The race is rushing on to the goal. If he pauses, or turns back, all is lost. No time then for great theories, or impracticable gospels. He will ponder over such things, and read them for his children when the trophies are hanging up in his rooms, and he has gained all the material prizes of life. But not now! It won't do to philosophise, but to fight. He must elbow his way onward, or turn his face to the wall, like a whipped child, whilst the world shouts, and his conscience whispers: 'Failure!' — that dread word, that paralyses everything, because it is so misunderstood. Because, if the living principle is not absolutely asphyxiated in the man, notwithstanding all his triumphs, his fat bank-book, his lands, his fields, his cattle browsing on a thousand hills, his honours thick upon him, he must feel, as he takes up his *Times* and reads:

“‘WALDRON. — In Sierra Leone, of jungle fever, Guy Waldron, in the 30th year of his age, missionary.’

a little pang of compunction; and hear a still, small voice saying: 'This is victory indeed!'

“He knew Guy Waldron. He was about to grasp his first great prize in life, a Fellowship in his College, when Guy entered as a freshman. A freshman, verily he was, with the face and the heart of a child. He had come up from some country rectory, where he had been trained by his father in some deep, old-world gospel of Truth and Beauty and generosity; by his mother and sisters in some old-world, transcendental love for holiness and purity. His first tutor was the Fellow about-to-be, the Man of the World whom we are contemplating. He wondered at the boy, at his freshness, his purity, his utter ignorance of life. He was a Dream-Child, seeing wonders everywhere, everywhere throwing out little jets of admiration and gratitude for all that he was taught and shewn in the new world, where he had been introduced. He was clever, too, eagerly grasping facts and data, and very quick at discerning beauty of form or thought in the classics. He had a distaste for mathematics, and a lack of reasoning power, as if his brain would snap if kept too long on the stretch. But he had a feminine intuition for the graces of style and composition, the moulded phrase, the one word that would fit and express the thought. ‘You will easily get the prize for Latin composition,’ said his tutor, ‘if you work a little harder.’ He seemed to work, but failed. His rival, a boy who had a widowed mother, took the prize. ‘You failed,’ said the tutor. ‘Yes, Sir!’ ‘And you failed because you wished to fail?’ said the tutor. The boy was silent. For some days the grave man thought it his solemn duty to warn the boy against such Quixotic chivalry. It was a grave defect of character. It would imperil all the success of life. He thought better of it; and now Guy Waldron, dead of jungle fever in Sierra Leone; and his quondam tutor?—He laid down the paper, and asked himself ‘Which is the failure here?’ But he dismissed the thought. He had trained himself to dismiss all such absurd thoughts. He looked around, and saw the splendours that accompanied his descent into the twilight of life. He demanded the world’s verdict.

And the world answered: Verily, thou hast fought well, and the crown is thine!

“Now, what I say about this man is applicable to the poet, the preacher, the orator, the artist, as well. It is not only the capitalist, who is a colossal failure, though he stands on his money bags, which lift him head and shoulders above the prophets, like Saul; but the poet, who wastes his Divine gift by singing on unworthy subjects, or who sings for gold or praise; and the artist, who sells his dower for dollars, or panders to an unworthy or meretricious taste; or a Fra Alberico, who, disgusted with the world, seeks the luxury of solitude, and repudiates the responsibilities, whilst he emancipates himself from the cares of life—that come under the lash of my gentle censures, and whom I turn face to the wall, and label ‘Failure!’ Men should be appraised for what they have effected for the good of humanity, and for the motives with which they have wrought that good. Whoever seeks himself or his own good fails. There is but one motive that sanctifies labour; there is but one work that consecrates the life of the individual and makes it something sacred and holy. That motive is, to keep the race from retrogression, and push it forward towards the final evolution. That work is the loosening of every energy in thought and action, that urges forward the individual, or society in the aggregate, towards the final goal.”

There was a faint murmur of applause, in which Father Dillon and Miss Hope but feebly joined. The doctor looked aggressive. He said:

“That is all very good, or, as you may say, transcendental, Miss Fraser, but does not every man, who helps himself and his family onward in life —?”

“Now, now, doctor,” interposed Father Dillon, seeing a shade of anxiety passing across Miss Fraser’s face, “remember our rules. No paper can be discussed until our next meeting. But, don’t forget your objections. We have many things to discuss, if I mistake not, there.”

The rest of the programme was duly gone through, and the guests dispersed. The doctor and Mr. Skelton always went home together. The Professor lingered behind. Mrs. Holden and Mr. Hunt, Miss Hope, and Mrs. Skelton went, two by two, down the hill.

"That's damned rot," said Mr. Skelton. "I wish that lady was in dire want of a hundred pounds. I wonder who would offer it to her, even if she had sacrificed a thousand to the cause of humanity? Humanity, as I understand it, is a beggarly thing at the best. I wish she was behind my counter for a week or two."

"Or saw my sick-beds," said the doctor. "Of course, it is all very nice, but it is Utopian, impracticable, for the bulk of people. Poor lady, she's young! I wish I could tell her what I saw on Thursday. An unfortunate poor chap, a sailor, was dying, and before he had succumbed, his brother had all his clothes folded up for easy transportation on the sofa, and his wife had sold his gold watch, which was a present from some American captain."

"The worst of these things is," said the manager, "that they soften a fellow out a little, and make him unfit for work. Now, the danger is that to-morrow I may make a fool of myself with some knowing chap that comes for a loan, and whom I ought to refuse politely, but resolutely. I'll tell you what, Doc., I'll have to keep to my room to-morrow, and let Randall do the managing in Cork. These things make an impression on you, man, though you know they're absurd."

"And the chief absurdity is," said the doctor, "that suppose a man were idiot enough to give up his honest work and become one of those madmen, he is sure to get as much abuse as Carnegie. See how Miss Fraser was able to prove that monk—Fra something or other—with his sandals and black bread, was just as bad as everybody else."

"Yes! but hang it, man," said the manager, "these things make an impression on a fellow somehow. And faith, I'm not prepared to go to the workhouse yet."

Mrs. Holden and Mrs. Skelton said "good-night" at their doors, and Hester Hope and Mr. Hunt walked on towards their respective homes.

"You agreed with all Miss Fraser said?" the young man murmured in low tones.

"No," she replied. "There was some truth, but not the whole truth."

"What, then, is the truth?" he asked.

"I do not think the service of man is man's highest destiny," she replied.

"No?" he said, incredulously. "What can possibly be higher?"

"And furthermore, I do not believe that it can ever afford sufficient reason for being good."

"You surprise me," he replied. "Can there be a higher motive than the good of one's fellow-beings?"

"Certainly," she replied. "As every creature subserves the interests of something higher in the scale of being, Man must have something to serve higher than his own species."

"Ha!" he gasped. "Then whom can man serve?"

"God!" she replied, "for whom alone he was made."

"Impossible!" he said. "You are making the Finite capable of serving the Infinite."

"And why not?" she replied. "Besides, man is not merely a finite being. In one point he touches infinity."

"Where?"

"In his immortality."

"These be difficult and far-reaching theses," he said. "Then this is your secret?"

"Yes. It lies at the root of all our lives!"

"I cannot say any more," he said, softly. "I begin to understand what the poet said when he used the words: 'Sainted, enskied.'"

It was perilously near a compliment, and Miss Hope said brusquely "Good-night!"

SESSION SEVENTH

By degrees, but imperceptibly and unaggressively, the doctor's wife and Mrs. Skelton contrived to make the house in Westbourne and the Villa Reale the rendezvous of the *Sunetoi*. They were so conveniently situated, no hills to mount, no trains to be run for; and the little surroundings were so pleasant, that after some demur all opposition gave way; and it was finally arranged that, except on some special occasions, the doctor's wife and Mrs. Skelton should entertain their guests alternately.

"You see, my dear," said Mrs. Holden, when the two arch-conspirators were hatching the plot, "Father Dillon has a nice house and everything there is *comme il faut*, but, somehow, I think our Protestant friends are somewhat embarrassed in going there."

"Quite true, my dear Mrs. Holden," said her friend, "and then it is awkward going to Cork to the Professor's house; and he's a bachelor, and you know —"

There was a gentle shrug of the shoulders.

"Quite so," said Mrs. Holden. "Now, poor Mr. Hunt is charming; but really, I don't like the idea of going into that draper's house, where he has rooms —"

"Yes! There seems to be always an odour of hot irons," said Mrs. Skelton. "Poor young man!"

"I suppose he'll marry Miss Hope some day. Things are looking in that direction," said the doctor's wife.

"Do you really think so?" gasped Mrs. Skelton.

"I do. And I'll show you a little secret; but you must promise me not to breathe it to a mortal!"

Mrs. Skelton made a wry face, as if she were kissing the Testament.

"Well, then, you remember our last meeting?"

"Yes, yes!" said the lady, impatiently.

"You remember we parted at your door?"

"Yes, yes!"

"And Mr. Hunt and Miss Hope went on together."

"So they did. What happened?"

"Only this. That a boy brought me this little note the following morning. You can read it; but remember your promise!"

Mrs. Skelton took the paper, frowned, and put her finger on her lips. She had kissed the *book* again. Then she read, whilst Mrs. Holden watched her face anxiously. That handsome face melted into a benevolent smile as she read on — a smile such as that which a gentle teacher would assume if she caught her pupils playing truant. The smile deepened and broadened as she proceeded. When she had ended, she nodded her head twice meaningly, and said, as she handed back the paper:

"Well, I never!"

"Now, am I right?" said the doctor's wife triumphantly.

"Well, I never!" said Mrs. Skelton. "Who'd have thought it?"

"Why I saw it all along!" said Mrs. Holden. "It was quite clear from the first moment!"

"Well, well, well, well!" said Mrs. Skelton. "Wonders will never cease. Do you know, my dear, what I am thinking?"

"Well?"

"Perhaps 'twouldn't be kind," said Mrs. Skelton, doubtfully, "but it would be a warning. What if you read the paper at the next meeting?"

"Me-e-e-e?" said Mrs. Holden, horrified. "Not for the world! And Father Dillon there. You know how he looks sometimes!"

"Yes, but don't you think 'tis our duty to stop it?" said Mrs. Skelton. "He's a Protestant, you know!"

"Of course, but I think he's very respectable; and, after all, wouldn't it be a good thing for Hester?"

"I don't like it," said Mrs. Skelton. "I'll tell you what you'll do," as a new thought struck her. "Don't read it yourself; but say how you found it, say it reads nicely, though sentimental, and ask some one, the Professor, or some one, to read it."

"Or Mr. Hunt himself. That's a grand idea."

"Don't ask Mr. Hunt, because he'd recognize it and put it in his pocket. Ask Miss Hope. We'll have rare fun."

"But you see 'tis a gentleman that writes, and we must get a gentleman to read it."

"True! Ah, then, the Professor! I'll watch Hester's face whilst he's reading it, and the truth will out."

"The very thing. After all, we really must have some amusement. Do you know, my dear, the whole thing is very dry."

"Miss Fraser was, certainly!" rejoined her friend. "I never heard such nonsense. And she might have left that poor monk alone."

"Ah, the bigotry will break out always."

"I'm sure only for your marvellous playing these *séances* would be intolerable," said Mrs. Skelton.

Mrs. Holden shrugged her shoulders.

"To tell you the truth, my dear, one of my principal reasons for wishing to have the meetings here at our own houses is the chance of having a decent piano. That 'Grand' at Father Dillon's is as old as the hills: and the others are only fit for a boarding-school."

"Now," said Father Dillon, as he seated himself in an easy chair in Mrs. Holden's drawing-room, "acting as self-appointed and permanent chairman of this most interesting Society, I shall gladly accept any comments the members may choose to make on that singularly able and interesting paper read by Miss Fraser at our last meeting."

"Let me say at once," said the Professor, "that I coincide with Miss Fraser's views. I think they embrace all that may be called the elements of the highest ethical teaching."

"I think these views," said Dr. Holden, "right, but impracticable. They are for the closet, not for the street; for the Church, but not for the marts of the world."

"But how can you say 'impracticable?'" asked the Professor, "when Miss Fraser has already quoted cases where her principles were actually reduced to practice?"

"How many cases?" asked the doctor, drily.

"Well, not many, indeed. But, of course, Miss Fraser only spoke of the cases that come under the public eye. How many instances of secret heroism and renunciation the dust and tumult of life conceal, can be known only to the All-Seeing."

"Quite true," said the doctor. "But I think you'll admit, Professor, that the vast bulk of humanity is moving on under different impulses. At least, so Mr. Skelton and I think."

"Yes!" said the Professor. "But all that does not lessen the truth of what Miss Fraser has said. The Divine instinct of self-surrender is there, although men will try to stifle it."

"That was just my point," said Miss Fraser. "I cannot deny facts, however I may deplore them. I only place fact against fact, that is, the lofty and avowed intuition of some grand, occult principle on the one hand; and its tacit denial on the other."

"Yes," said Father Dillon, breaking in. "However much we may deplore the selfishness of mankind under the fierce competition for existence, little things arise from time to time to show we are not utterly lost. You remember Father Damien's case, a few years ago. Not one out of a million would or could have followed his example; but the whole world rose up to applaud him for what he had done."

"When he was dead," said the doctor, cynically, "and had ceased to trouble the world's self-esteem."

"Now, now, doctor," said the priest. "That's rather cynical. The poor old world is not so bad, after all."

"No, so long as you don't tread on its corns," said the doctor.

"But, look at the inequality of the world's judgments," said Miss Hope, breaking silence. She remembered what had passed between Mr. Hunt and herself, and was loth to introduce it. But she was driven on by her love of truth. "The same world that lost its head over a Father Damien would burn a Fra Alberico at the stake."

"It is a slight exaggeration," said the Professor, smiling. "But the world, as you are pleased to call it, Miss Hope, will certainly always recognise deeds of active benevolence, like Father Damien's, but has no patience with praying and fasting monks."

"Why?" said Miss Hope, simply.

"Because, as Miss Fraser has so well said, it is higher and nobler to labour for humanity than for one's self."

"There is something higher and nobler than either," said Hester Hope, "and something that embraces both, and sanctifies them."

Mr. Hunt bent forward, and fixed his eyes eagerly on the girl's face. Mrs. Holden gently nudged her neighbour.

"The question touches the whole range of religious controversy," said Miss Hope, modestly, "and I fear it would lead to a long discussion here. But, really, if you analyse all religious differences, you will find they resolve themselves into the one question: Was man made for himself, or for his fellow-man, or for God? The first idea is the lowest and basest, although the most universally accepted. The second is somewhat nobler, but is only a half-truth. The third is the whole truth, and the greatest, although but a few chosen souls understand it. But there is the one point where our Church is in direct antagonism to all others. We hold that man is made for God, and God alone, and that everything which detracts from that service or worship is

high treason. Humanitarianism in its best form is but the moonlight reflection of that service, and it pales away into insignificance and unworthiness if not consecrated by the higher motive. The service of God is man's first duty. The service of man is a correlative of that duty, or is a mere sentiment. If the former, it is good and meritorious. If the latter it is a useless and unmeaning fad. What do you think constituted the nobleness, the magnificence of Father Damien's sacrifice?"

She had challenged the Professor with her eyes. That good man looked at her in a bewildered manner.

"Why, of course, his giving up all the pleasures of home and civilization to become a leper for the sake of lepers," said the Professor.

"You are quite wrong," she said gravely. "I don't know if Father Damien will ever be canonised. But if he is, it will never be for that."

"For what then?" said the Professor.

"For his love of God," the girl said, "and his saintly perception of Christ in the leper."

"We cannot understand," said the Professor, looking at Miss Fraser and Mr. Hunt for corroboration. "We understand nothing higher than the service of humanity."

"Then you'd be very much shocked to hear that we think the prevention of one venial sin — a hasty word, a half-involuntary emotion — is more of importance than the building of a thousand miles of railroad."

"Nonsense!" said the Professor. Then, hastily correcting himself, he said:

"Pardon the rude expression, Miss Hope, but really, I cannot grasp that."

"The words are not mine," she said, "they are Cardinal Newman's. He said something more shocking."

"Indeed?" said the Professor, who was getting a little uneasy under this dialogue.

"Yes! He said somewhere that it would be more meri-

torious to build a magnificent church to the glory of God, even though a worshipper should never enter there, than a score of asylums or hospitals for wrecked humanity."

"Then all I can say is," said the Professor, "that I differ *toto cælo* from His Eminence. I'd rather subscribe to one ward in a City Hospital than contribute a shilling to the biggest church in Christendom."

"And you'd pull down all the churches and build hospitals?" said Miss Hope.

"At least, I'd strip them of their wealth and splendour, which are waste; and devote them to nobler purposes."

Miss Hope fell back in her chair, murmuring: "This might have been sold for much, and given to the poor."

The Professor glared at her for a moment, and Father Dillon, seeing how things were tending, said brusquely:

"Now, now, Mrs. Holden, the time is up. Let us get back to the Muses, please!"

"Certainly, Father Dillon," said that lady, gaily. "But, before we proceed to what-you-call him, the Muse of Music, if there be such, let us hear the Muse of Poetry."

The company looked at the good lady in a bewildered manner, fearing, dreading that she was about to inflict some awful doggerel upon them. She said, however, with a meaning smile:

"Oh, no, I'm not so wicked as that. This is a little thing picked up by a newsboy the last night of our meeting. Would you read it, Father Dillon, or — eh? — the Professor?"

"'Tis sure to be sentimental," said Father Dillon. "Give it to the Professor!"

The doctor's wife handed it demurely to the Professor, who adjusted his glasses accordingly. The good lady then sat down, expecting a scene, and fixing her eyes on Hester Hope.

The Professor hummed a little, got under the electric light, and read:

WHERE MEN WORSHIP

I

I saw you, O my sister, at the Ball,
 A musk rose nestled in your raven hair,
I saw you sweep the music-haunted hall,
 And you were Queen, and pure, as you were fair.
 But, sister mine, I did not love you there!

II

I saw you, O my sister, on the pier,
 You walked, the empress of that little world,
For you, for you alone, that fanfare clear
 From rock to sea, from sea to rock, was hurled.
 But, sister mine, I did not seek you there.

III

I saw you, O my sister, at the sea,
 The night hung low, and silver were the stars,
I saw them quiver in mad jealousy —
 Your eyes were mirrored there beneath the bars.
 But, sister mine, I did not worship there!

IV

I saw you, sister, in the crowded room,
 Men followed you for face, or mien, or voice,
Sudden there shot across the lights a gloom,
 And a hand held me, as I cried, Rejoice!
 Ay, sister mine, I did not glory there.

V

I saw you, O my sister, by the hearth,
 A flame leaped up, and crimsoned half your face,
And rubied, too, the dainty little birth,
 That nestled in your breast with such sweet grace.
 Ah, sister mine, I think I worshipped there.

VI

I saw you, sister, by the bed of Death,
Dusk were your robes, and tear-swoln were your eyes,
I thought I heard the dead with one last breath
Bless you, and beckon to the open skies.
Ah, sister mine, I think I loved you there.

"That's all," said the Professor.

There was a deep silence for a few seconds. It soon became painful. Reginald Hunt sat still, his head leaning back against the damask of the chair, his eyes fixed on the ceiling. There were tears in those eyes.

Hester Hope, pale but composed, looked down at her hands, which were folded in her lap. Miss Fraser shot an inquiring glance at the doctor's wife, who was now somewhat embarrassed, and said in a confused manner:

"I wonder who wrote it!"

"Whoever is the happy author," said the Professor meaningly, and advancing towards Mrs. Holden with the paper, "I have the honour of restoring it to the lady who gave us such pleasure."

He was handing the paper to Mrs. Holden, when Reginald Hunt interfered:

"I fear I must claim it, Professor," he said, "with Mrs. Holden's gracious permission."

"Oh, certainly," said that lady, who would have wished to be somewhere outside her rooms just then. "I didn't know — I thought — I should have asked —"

"These lines," said Mr. Hunt, smoothing out the paper, "were written some years ago to a sister, my only married sister. I'm so sorry they should have been forced upon your patience. She and her little boy are dead."

There was no music that evening.

SESSION EIGHTH

IN the solitude of his room, Father Dillon began to feel that certain ominous clouds of mischief were beginning to gather around his little project. He had seen somewhere that it needs only two human beings to create a tragedy, and he realised that in the companionship and interchange of ideas between six or seven persons, widely differing in religion and politics, there was sure to be some friction, which, sooner or later, would lead to the breaking up of a cherished institution. "Rocks ahead," he soliloquised. "There is but one way of avoiding them — that is, like the helmsman of the 'Hesperus,' to steer for the open sea."

"That is," he continued, "we shall, in future, keep clear of the personal element, and limit ourselves to those subjects where there may be difference of opinion, but no violent sentiment—literature, science, music, art, education, etc. Surely we can discuss these matters without heat."

He then began to think of the last little episode at the former meeting. The picture of that young lad, leaning back in his chair, and staring at the ceiling, whilst the tears gathered in his eyes; and then his simple words: "She and her little boy are dead!" dissolved and unnerved the young priest, until he suddenly found himself searching for his pocket-handkerchief. And then, just as suddenly, the horrible idea flashed across his mind that Mrs. Holden had some sinister intention in producing that paper and asking to have it read. He got very indignant; then at once checked himself by the reflection that these things must be.

"They are the inevitable accidents of life," he thought. "We must tolerate, and — forgive!"

He looked up the subject for the next meeting. It was a

paper on "The Necessity of Maintaining Classical Studies," to be read by the Professor.

"That, at least, is neutral ground," he thought. "And I shall take right good care that nothing of a personal nature shall intrude there."

The Professor commenced his argument for the maintenance of the Classics as an essential part in the programme of a liberal education by saying, rather dogmatically:

"The worst symptom of the degeneracy of our age is the slight that is thrown upon those ancient masterpieces — the Greek and Roman Classics. There are other symptoms of degeneracy, all arising from the same cause — this evil, democratic spirit, which aims at levelling all things upwards by vulgarising whatever is most sacred and reserved and refined; and levelling all things downwards by lowering the standard of education and refinement, until all things meet on a common level of turpitude and vulgarity. In social life this level is touched in the tweed cap, and the drawing-room cigarette; in politics by the introduction of a labourer into the Cabinet; in art by the penny postcard photograph; in poetry by the parody; and in literature by the elimination of the Classics. The 'gentleman' went out with the silk hat; and the world went into *deshabille*. And just because it is now the fashion to get into easy undress, it is also the fashion to repudiate whatever was formal, or graceful, or reticent and conservative; and hence, they have put the Classics upon the shelf. I know that the excuse takes another form, and a sinister one; but you will find it is the equivalent of what I have alleged. It is said that the age is a practical one; that it seeks not the graces, but the utilities of life; and hence, scientific studies must claim the larger portion of human interest and human labour. Chemistry, mechanics, whatever contributes to make life easier, and to remove its little frictions and obstacles, is what we want. The benefactor of his kind now is the man who can invent a new species of foot-warmer for a railway carriage, or a special kind of boot-horn. Vast fortunes are realised by

the invention of a gutta percha coin-holder, or a new kind of collar-stud. Men build palaces out of pills, and buy motors from petroleum pomade. Whoever contributes to the utilities of life is a benefactor. Men do not want to take trouble about anything, and whoever helps them to an easy and useless life is their friend. All that is gracious, all that is refined, all that is profound or elevating, is relegated to the limbo of disused and obsolete trumperies; and whoever is unwise enough to seek to disinter and popularise such things is regarded as a reactionary and out of date. Hence, our artists have to keep their pictures turned to the wall, until the moth eats them; and our poets have to sell matches at Charing Cross, or hold horses in Piccadilly. And hence, too, is a classical scholar out of date. Were he as learned as Porson, or Doctor Parr, it is all the same. He is not wanted. The day is gone when a man may be made a bishop for his studies on the Greek accent. A good financier, or an architectural botch, would be of more value just now. Why then do I insist on the necessity of a classical education? Why do I set my own opinion, ancient and retrograde, against the bent and bias of the time? Because, ladies and gentlemen, there will be always in this world a certain few who positively refuse to go along with this workaday, practical, utilitarian, but essentially vulgar age; and who still are dreamers enough to believe that the time may come when the Graces may once more revisit the earth, and bring back to a lost and hopelessly vulgarised humanity all that 'sweetness and light' which belonged to those golden periods in human history, when the world passed through a new birth, and came back once more to its inheritance. And in the train of the Graces, their eloquent and gracious servitors and hand-maidens, will come the Classics of Greek and Rome, with all their severe beauty, all the music and sweetness of Delphi and Parnassus, all the art and gladness of Sabine villa, or Mantuan vineyard. For, see what we have lost. The best thought of the world, outside Revelation, is enshrined in the heirlooms of Greece and Rome.

When the Hellenes came to Italy, they brought with them all the poetry and philosophy of the East. The last words of human wisdom were said by Plato and the Stagyrity. All that modern sages have been able to do for a thousand years is to put into another and baser form the wisdom of Rome and Athens. Read up your Montaigne, your Montesquieu, your Erasmus and Bacon. They say nothing that was not said of old by the banks of the Tiber and Ilyssus. Do you suppose for a moment that there is a single original idea in Shakspeare or Milton? Not one! The powers of the human mind are limited, and the initial energy which Nature gave to man expired long ago, when the ashes of the ancient poets and philosophers were inurned for burial. But have their modern imitators spoken better than the masters whom they have rifled and despoiled? No! I am no great believer in the magic of form. I like to get at the kernel of a thought; and I care little for the husks of language. Yet, I admit form, too, has its own advantages. But who will compare the form of the unmusical modern with the grace and music that charmed wild beasts and built cities by their magic? The penny whistle is a poor substitute for the Pipes of Pan; and your greatest melodist, Milton, has in his best lines but the mock thunder of a theatre, compared with the majestic roll of Homer's hexameters. Greek is the language of the gods! Latin is the language of emperors and warriors. Put into English or French the equivalent of πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης, or δακρύνειν γελάσασα, and you will know what I mean. Take from your dictionaries all the words of Greek or Roman origin, and what a poverty-stricken, tatter-de-malion, and Jack o' Bedlam language you will have! Analyse the sonorous verses of your Milton. You will find sound and sense alike reduplicated as in the Ancients. Where he says:

Unrespited, unpitied, unreprieved,

Euripides would say in another sense:

*Αλεκτρα γηράσκονσαν ἀνυμμένα τέ

Where would you get an equivalent in English to these words of Aristophanes:

ἀπείρος, ἀθαλάττωτος, ἀσαλμίνιος;

Shakspeare borrowed the 'prophetic soul' of Hamlet from the *πρόμαντις θυμός* of Euripides, and his 'sea of troubles' from the *κακῶν πέλαγος* in the *Hippolytus*.¹ But this is only 'breaking a butterfly upon a wheel.' So far as great thoughts put into equivalently noble language are concerned (the idea of Dante in his *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, 'optimis conceptionibus optima loquela convenit'), the ancient classics have no rivals in modern times. The German language comes nearest in its majestic if rugged syllables: but it is *longo intervallo*. Far behind the splendid imagery, the vast conceptions and the Divine tongues that spoke by the Tiber and the Ægean, come the stuttering, halting, ill-sounding idioms of the moderns. The former is 'a feast of languages.' We have stolen the scraps.

"But even in its lowest uses, as a matter of mere utility, we must fall back on Greek and Latin. The new ideas that are being forged in the ever-active brains of men need a nomenclature; and, as if by instinct and under compulsion, we hark back to Greece and Rome. We dare not talk of a pleasurable life. We call it *Hedonism*. If we speak of Force, we call it *Dynamic* or *Kinetic*. If we speak of children developing the talent for observation or comparison, we call it the *Heuristic* aptitude. We dare not use the poor, pauper-relative word in English. It would shrink aside and be ashamed. By a natural tendency we use the kingliest word. But mark our inconsistency and ingratitude. We cast our ancient treasures into the lumber room, and then search them for a label for some beggarly science. We glorify our sciences, but we have to borrow their names from sources which we affect to despise. We kill our kings, and dress ourselves in their tinsels; and we cover our plebeian poverty with the tags and rags which we

¹ Lowell's "English Poets."

have stolen from the mummies in our mausoleums. We have robbed ancient kingdoms of their art treasures, despoiled them of their sculptured trophies, and disinterred the buried splendours of ancient dynasties — to be stared at by a proletariat, that drops its H's, and smokes rank tobacco into the face of a Greek god. And then we talk of progress because we have poisoned the air with petrol — and taught our children to sing:

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
Now I know well what you are —
Fumes of soda, flames of tin,
Incandescent hydro-gin.

Don't smile, ladies and gentlemen! We have sunk very low in the scale of civilisation, all the lower because we dream we are walking on the summits. But I have a hope that the world will swing round again in some kind of a parabola; that the young will learn reticence, reverence, and a certain chastity of taste that will redeem them from vulgarity. But, the most potent factor in that reformation, which is to give us gentlemen in place of cads, will be a recurrence to that system of education, on which for eighteen centuries the best minds of the world were trained, and which, combined with native genius, gave us those names and memories that fill and hallow the Pantheons of the world."

There was a subdued murmur from the *Sunetoi*, whether of approval or dissent could not be ascertained. It was quite clear that each individual had been *hit* in some weak point, or had marked off some thesis and assertion as controvertible. Mr. Skelton fidgeted a little under that allusion to the "tweed cap," which he wore rather ostentatiously, even on Sundays. That little hint, too, about cigarettes in the drawing-room seemed not a little confusing. But no one spoke, until at length Mr. Hunt, looking towards Father Dillon, said rather languidly:

"We may not discuss the paper, I believe?"

"No!" said Father Dillon. "We must keep strictly to our rules. At the next meeting you can say what you please."

"I hope I am not out of order," said Mr. Hunt, "in deducing a scholium, or sequence, from the paper. I mean the value of language as the spoken medium of thought, as an art in itself, little heeded nowadays. Mind, I am not now speaking of it in its philological aspect, nor as a means of culture, nor as holding in solution the best thoughts of mankind, but simply as an art, such as music; for, after all, language is music."

He looked around, as if hoping that this would be controverted, so that he would seem not to monopolise the conversation. But there was no challenge. He went on:

"I had the most violent prejudice at one time against French. I shared Byron's opinion that it was a syncopated, mutilated kind of Latin, excessively nasal and dental, until it gave you the idea of some kind of chatter, such as might be heard in a tropical forest some morning when its animal life had woke up from the night silences. Then, one day, coming up from Paris to Havre, I happened to be seated near a lady, who was conversing with a friend. The voice was not subdued, neither was it loud. The subject was uninteresting, so I closed up the shutters of intellect against the meaning of her words, and I listened, as one would listen to the melodious singing of a bird. For that was just what it was. She sang the whole way at intervals, and when we glided into some station, and the accents were more clear and distinct, I confess I had just the same pleasure as if I sat out on a June night and heard the chanting of the nightingale. You smile! Well, try the experiment for yourselves. I know you, good Irish, despise such things, and rather pride yourselves on what you call the brogue —"

"No, no, no, Mr. Hunt," said Father Dillon, "but the truth is, we have a strong prejudice against pretence or affectation of any kind, and we particularly detest the English accent."

"I cannot really say what is an 'English accent,'" said Mr. Hunt. "But you speak English, do you not?"

"Certainly, and we think we speak it more correctly than Englishmen. At least, it is notorious that foreigners can understand us more easily."

"Quite possible. Just as you would understand the broad *patois* of a Breton more easily than the cultivated accent of a Parisian. But, to come back! It seems to me highly inconsistent, and unreasonable, that you should not seek to study and speak the English language in its most perfect form. I can quite understand your objecting to speak English, as it is to you a foreign tongue. If you could all agree to speak only Gaelic that would be quite reasonable. But, if you speak English, why not speak it in its best form, *i.e.*, why not approach the very sources where it is pure and undefiled? If you can master the French language you try to speak it as a Parisian. If you wish to speak Italian perfectly, you study the Tuscan dialect and the Roman accent. You go to Weimar or Berlin to catch the German intonation. But you are content to speak English whilst repudiating, and even hating, its best and most perfect form. To speak English with an Irish accent is as absurd as to speak the Gaelic like a Yorkshireman."

"Then you don't like our Irish accent?" said Miss Hope.

"I did not say so," said Mr. Hunt, gravely. "In fact, I notice that each individual I meet has his own peculiarity in that respect. Then again, you must remember there is a vast difference between voice and accent. Nature has given to some the sweetest of voices — some deep and rich, like a contralto; some very high and tenuous; some deep; some raucous. What I am contending for is this, not so much the acquisition of accents, which is rather an ambiguous thing, but the cultivation of the voice, which, as I hold it to be music, is capable of infinite training. Go into a crowded drawing-room. You hear the buzz of a hundred voices. You are indifferent or bewildered. You hear one! Instantly you grow interested. It speaks to *you* individually. You have been waiting for it all these years. You listen! The

words sink into your heart. You are fascinated. The voice sinks away, and is lost in the buzz of the human hive. But you are not satisfied. You seek it again. Perhaps you will never find it. But you can never forget that voice. It will haunt you to your grave."

"I suppose," said Father Dillon, "that is why St. John Chrysostom was called the 'golden-mouthed,' and some of our moderns are spoken of as 'silver-tongued.'"

"Possibly. But I am only concluding that it is an art worth pursuing. The voice is the gift of Nature; the art may be acquired. And I think you will find that the art is hidden, not in accent, but in intonation —"

"Yes, you're quite right," broke in the Professor. "After all it is the one faculty wherein we differ from the brute creation, and for that reason alone it should be cultivated. And —"

The Professor looked around slyly, as if he were going to give himself away, and he then said demurely, quoting Mr. Hunt:

"After all, the 'sweetest sound on earth is the voice of the friend you love.'"

The meeting broke up in laughter, and Father Dillon felt that he had had another narrow escape.

SESSION NINTH

THERE was a curious and marked change at the next meeting of the *Sunetoi*. Instead of the careless, easy, lounging way in which they were used to sit, they affected a little propriety that seemed to border closely on stiffness; and their remarks were uttered in a tone of caution and precision so very remarkable that it would have been embarrassing but that it could not be kept up, and it soon thawed away into easy familiarity again. Then it was noticed that the priest, the Professor, and the doctor had brought their silk hats; and Robert Skelton had compromised with a bowler. The ladies were as precise and perfect as usual. There was no need of change there.

The Professor at once threw down his glove.

"I should like very much," he said, "to know if any objection has been taken to my paper!"

There was an ominous silence. The doctor broke in:

"I read the Classics for six years. I'm blessed if I can conjugate *amo* to-day."

"You can't be always young, doctor," said the priest. "You had your day!"

There was a smile at the doctor's expense. But he was not put out.

"Joking apart, Father Dillon," he said, "I think all the time I spent at Classics lost. If I had been taught a little French, or German, it would have served me in better stead. I never feel such a thorough fool as when I stand on the deck of a Rhine steamer and hear everyone around conversing; and I — a dummy and a fool. I often thought that the man I most envied on earth is the head waiter at a Swiss hotel."

"The Professor assumes that the language of the dead gods is better than the language of living men," said the priest.

"Go on!" said the Professor, defiantly.

"I must say it is deucedly uncomfortable," said Robert Skelton, "when a foreign fellow comes in to your office, and talks away his gibberish at you; and you don't know whether he is to give you twenty or twenty-five franc pieces for a pound."

"And then if you go to an opera," said the doctor's wife, "there you sit, listening to words you don't understand, but trying to look interested and to follow the music."

There was a pause. The doctor struck in:

"The fact is, Professor, the age is a practical one; and you and I cannot change it. Now, the first object of life is to live. To live one must have a maintenance. To have a maintenance, one must have a business, or a profession — some kind of calling. And for ninety-nine per cent. of the business callings of to-day science is necessary in some shape or form. The Classics are nowhere."

This seemed conclusive. It only aroused the dormant ire of the Professor.

"I must take the objections," he said, "in detail. And first of all — the Swiss waiter. That interesting person seems to be 'the glass and mould of fashion and form,' the 'cynosure of all eyes:' a kind of Hyperion feeding the satyrs, and exciting their unbounded envy. Yet, I venture to ask, does anyone here — do you, doctor, do you, Father Dillon, do you, Skelton, consider that polyglottic Swiss waiter an educated man? Place an Oxford professor at that table in that *salon* at Interlaken or Chamonix and place that Mezzofanti of a waiter right opposite him. Will anyone in that company, Russ or Briton, Spaniard or Italian, Roman or Greek, maintain that the man of the napkin is the superior in education to that dumb and silent professor? Or, take those chattering Germans on the deck of a Rhine steamer. I dare say it would be interesting to hear them speak in an intelligible tongue. But, my dear doctor, spare your self-pity on your own shortcomings, and ask yourself: Is what these guttural Teutons

are chattering about worth listening to? Isn't it all about sauerkraut and lager beer; about the price of a sausage, or a pound of ham? And do you mean to tell me that you would sacrifice all the evenings of your life, which you may spend in communion with the immortals at your fireside, in exchange for a paltry vocabulary, which you can use once or twice in a year with a crowd of tourists on the deck of a steamer; or with the waiter, who is studying under his multitudinous vocables how much backsheesh you will give him, or how he will manage to swell your bill? And you, Madame," he continued, turning to Mrs. Holden, "you regret that you cannot follow the libretto at the Opera! Did you ever study that libretto, or any libretto, at your ease, in your own room?"

"No — no!" said Mrs. Holden, who was getting rather frightened.

"Well, I did," said the Professor. "And I can assure you that the united brains of all the Bedlamites in the country could not put so much nonsense into so much space. Be assured, Madame, that you lost nothing by not being able to follow your Tetrizzini or Patti. The good *artistes* do not follow the meaning themselves."

"Really, there is something in that," said Mr. Hunt, waking up. "The essentials of an opera are voice, action, scenery. The dialogue is secondary."

"I beg your pardon, Rex," said the Professor. "Secondary? Isn't it absurd? A poor wretched imitation of the ancient Greek choruses. The melody and the voices conceal the nonsense of the favourite songs; but nothing can redeem the utter banality and foolishness of the dialogue. Do you remember that absurd scene when Parsifal in the second act jumps up from the embraces of Kundry and shouts:

Amfortas! —

The wound! — The wound! —

Amid my heart it blazes. —

The woe-cry! The woe-cry!

The shattering woe-cry!

From deep within me leaps it aloft.
 Oh! — Oh! —
 Thou wretchedest!
 Thou woofullest!
 The wound, I saw it streaming. —
 Now bleeds it in myself —
 Here — here!
 No! No! It is not the wound
 Shed be its blood in fiery streams!
 Here! Here, the blaze in my heart!
 The yearning, the merciless yearning.
 That all my senses at once has seized!
 Oh! Pang of Love!
 How all upheaves and quails and quakes
 In surge of sinful longing! . . .

Isn't it awful nonsense? But it is really wisdom compared with the Italian. That language does not flow. It jumps. How could the veriest wretch that is taken out to be hanged refrain from laughing if he heard this:

Perfido!
 Or basti!
 Fermati!
 E a me sottrarti sperì?
 Vieni!
 Mi lascia! — scostati!
 Tu sei di Norma sposo.

Imagine rational beings singing that *rifacimento* of nonsense strutting around the stage, and gesticulating like madmen."

The Professor gently mopped his forehead, where the dews were gathering. The Professor was excited. The *Sunetoi* were smiling politely.

"But I was near forgetting *your* argument, doctor," said the Professor, suddenly remembering. "How is it that it runs? It clinches matters of course! Let me see. You can't live without a profession. You can't have a profession, or trade,

or occupation, without science. You can get on anywhere without the Classics."

The doctor nodded.

"'Tisn't exactly what I said, but 'twill do!"

"Very good. It is simply the good old utilitarian argument again; and, on that ground alone, I might meet it with the 'scorn of scorn,' because, whatever else is true or false, one thing is absolutely certain: 'That not by bread alone doth man live!' But, taking existence on its lowest levels, is it quite correct to say that science or a scientific education is absolutely essential to our well-being nowadays, or that it is the only means of that first duty of bread-winning? I doubt it. For example, in this room how many of us live by science? Probably only one. Take the chief street in our city. How many traders, shopkeepers, merchants, live and thrive by science? Not one, except the chemist. Go into the country. What do your farmers, gardeners, labourers, know of science? *Nil*. Yet, the world is progressing. And even when your wonder-working science comes in, can you see that it is ultimately for the benefit of humanity? It has made life swifter and perhaps easier. But has it prolonged life, and made it more blessed? Take your own department. You do a great deal for suffering humanity; but was not humanity a thousand times better off, were not men and women healthier, and more human, before you invented all your artificial props and stays for a decaying civilisation?—"

"You are running away with the argument," said the doctor. "Science has met the wants of the age; it has not caused them; and because the wants of the age demand the assistance of science, therefore science is indispensable. Men can live without Classics; they cannot get on now without the aid of science."

"I'm afraid we're drifting with the tide," said Father Dillon, seeing how the Professor was embarrassed. "We've got away from the subject of a classical education. After all, the great question is, not whether science is more impor-

tant than literature, but whether we shall substitute it altogether for the good old classical education of the past."

"Well," said the Professor, recovering himself, "I waive the question of utility. I contend that science may get you bread and cheese, but it takes a classical education to form a *gentleman*."

That ominous word fell like a shower of lead on the audience. All saw that it would lead at once to that awful question, which no man has ever solved: What *is* a gentleman; and there was much danger of friction here, because the Professor was an aristocrat, his great-grandfather having been steward to an earl, and the doctor was a democrat of the purest water, his grand-uncle having been Sir Ralph Holden, of Holden's Court, Co. Mayo. He had forgotten, or altogether ignored the fact, but his good lady had a more retentive memory. She knew her power, and exercised it mercilessly. She had only to say "Sir Ralph," and she got as many salaams as the Grand Turk. But Mr. Hunt saw the drift of things and the cloud of anxiety gathering on Father Dillon's face, so he raised himself from his lounging attitude, and said in his cold and even accents:

"I am afraid the question is one that must be solved by the individual, and not by the community. One thing must be said, that the strongest protagonists (I am not including the present company) appear to be on the side of the Classics, whilst science makes up for the defect by its glorious insolence. Personally, I am in favour of the Classics, partly from an old love, and 'auld lang syne,' partly because I think science is becoming insupportable in its pretensions. I like modesty, and I confess to a very culpable desire to take down and level whatever is intolerant and aggressive."

He paused, and the Professor looked relieved. The doctor was scornfully silent.

"If it was only to refute the doctor, Mrs. Holden," said Father Dillon, "we must have some *intensely* classical music to-night. What shall it be?"

"Whatever you please," she said. "Would you like Beethoven's Sonata in B flat, or his Symphony in F?"

"Very good," said Father Dillon. "We shall have both; it will be the marriage of the classics and at least one — science!"

SESSION TENTH

"THESE meetings are disturbing my night's rest," said Reginald Hunt at their next Session. "That last discussion about Classics v. Science kept the wheels of my brain revolving, and I didn't get to bed till after twelve."

"I hope you had a midnight visitor," said Father Dillon. "Another 'Ægina?'"

"No!" said the young man, shaking his head sadly. "It was a different kind of ghost. It was a scientist — Trismegistus!"

"Tris — what?" said Mrs. Skelton. "I never heard such a name."

"*Trismegistus*," said Mr. Hunt. "It means *Thrice-Greatest* — a perfect adaptation to the unbounded conceit of the tribe."

The Professor gently rubbed his hands. He had an able auxiliary.

"He was in my armchair," continued Mr. Hunt. "I couldn't turn him out. I did the next best thing. I wrote verses on him."

"Did you read them for him?" said the doctor, turning around sharply.

"I did."

"And he remained?"

"Unto the end, penitent and sorrowful."

"Then I must say," said the doctor, "ghosts are more amiable personages than we have hitherto imagined."

"You will be confirmed in that opinion if you have the patience to hear the lines. They are not numerous. May I?"

"Certainly," said Father Dillon.

"What great courage these Englishmen have," whispered

Mrs. Skelton to her friend. "I'm sure I should have shrieked out, or fainted."

"'Sh!" said Mrs. Holden. "'Tis all make-believe. He is only inventing an excuse for airing his verses."

"I wish Father Dillon would let us bring some nice young people here, and let us have a dance, or charades, or something. This thing is awfully tiresome. Look at Robert."

Robert looked infinitely bored. He came there as a matter of duty, because the priest had invited him as a representative man. But he sighed for the easy familiarity of his club, and the blessed sight of kings and knaves. He toyed with his watch chain, crossed his legs twenty times, scratched the bald spot on his head, yawned, tried to look serious, and caught himself smiling, to the great embarrassment of his wife, whilst the young Englishman read calmly and coldly:

TRISMEGISTUS

Thrice Greatest, can it be you? You have honoured me, Sir,
to-night.

I was just turning over your books in the gleam of the pale twilight,

And wondering what you were like; what manner of man you were.
And there, so silent and still, you sit in my audience-chair.

Come from the mists and the shadows — the life you did ever
deny —

The "gaseous" life you called it — the ghost of a faith gone by.
You said, All ended in death; and lo, you come from afar,
Your presence to-night is a proof you are more than the clod or
the star.

I grant 'tis a sad confession; but science is ever so sure,
Built as it is on the pillars that ever and aye endure —
Granite and porphyry pillars, kneaded and hammered by fire,
And Faith, but the Iris of Hope, when the day and the life expire.

Can you remember the past — the noondays that ever sped
Swift for the thoughts ambitious that harried your weary head;
And nights so solemn and still, when over the gleaming glass,
Greater or lesser you watched the myths of Creation pass?

Watched the loves of amœbæ, broken, to make new life,
Studied the wars of worlds, the winged ephemera's strife,
Delved in the deeps of the earth, horrid with seams and scars,
Swallowed the phagocytes, and reeled 'mid the midnight stars.

But things are changed, you say, have taken another shape,
You cannot plummet the sky, nor measure a soul with tape,
Dark spaces there are, where never the lantern's yellow rays
Can pierce; where the veils are thicker than human hand can
raise.

And so peace cometh at last, tho' never so weary the quest,
The busy brain is asleep there on the churchyard's breast,
And thou art a shade from the shades, a phantom that sitteth
nigh,
The work of your hand, of your brain, of your life, to condemn
and decry.

Well, Trismegistus, you know, I have never been merciless,
I am quite too sure of myself to heed a blasphemous guess.
And, as you are pleased to come, and turn my audience-chair
Into a stool of repentance, you shall not be pilloried there.

And so your penance is brief; but this I shall bid you do:
You will haunt the homes of your colleagues, and look them through
and through;
You will draw your ghostly finger athwart the reeking page,
And be the Familiar Spirit to many a Sibyl and Sage.

Whisper: "You cannot know all; for short is the leap of sight,
Palsied the touch that feels, feeble the hands that smite;
Dull the ear that believes it hears in the midnight blast
Nought but the wind-vortices whirling and sweeping past.

"There are more things, Horatio." Well, yes, you know the rest.

There's no profession of faith like the head sunk deep on the breast.

Thou art the least, Thrice Greatest! The clarion of morning sounds,

Back to thy realm, Thrice Greatest! Back to the Spirit-bounds!

"Well, now," said the doctor, after a painful pause, "I consider that illiberal. After all, to what do we owe all modern progress but to science?"

"Quite true," said Mr. Hunt. "But it is not the progress of science, but the imperiousness of science we object to. It is the tacit denial of that first principle — that the end of all knowledge is the conviction that we know nothing."

"We must not labour that question," said the doctor. "It is tattered and mauled beyond all recognition. But what I object to in that — eh? — poem or verses is, the pillorying or attacking of a great man. The title is sarcastic, and, as such, is objectionable. And, after all, say what you like, the history of mankind is the history of great men."

"Why, doctor," said Father Dillon, "you are turning your back on all your great principles. You — a Democrat, ignoring the masses, and pinning your faith in the individual — why, that is a surprise."

"I'm sure if Sir Ralph —" said Mrs. Holden; but the doctor interrupted his spouse politely, though severely.

"Jennie, let Sir Ralph rest. He did his work in his own time, and passed. But I am not disloyal to the people or to my principles if I maintain that the whole course and progress of the race is directed to the evolution of its greatest men. The masses seethe and labour and propagate, just as the occult powers of Nature work blindly and silently beneath the ground, until all their efforts culminate in the creation of one flower or fruit above the surface."

"And I suppose," said the Professor, "that just as these

occult and cryptic forces know nothing of the beautiful thing they have created, so the world knows nothing of its greatest men."

"Quite so. They come silently, develop humbly and patiently, cast around them their benign influence, and depart. Sometimes, they exert no influence, but are content with their own greatness, self-involved, self-reliant, and self-contented."

"I cannot accept either of your two positions, doctor," said Mr. Hunt. "I cannot believe that all the suffering and toil, and upward labouring of the vast masses of mankind have for their object the sudden breaking and flowering of one soul out of millions; neither can I believe that a great soul, such as you contemplate, can exist without exerting a single influence on his kind."

"Well, then," said the doctor, "what is the end towards which the toiling and labouring masses are tending? I am a democrat, a strong advocate of the theory that, whilst it is quite absurd to pretend that all men are born equal, or have equal privileges, still there are certain rights common to every unit of humanity, amongst them the absolute liberty of pushing forward and utilising without coercion or impediment whatever faculties Nature has given him. Hence I contend that it is a crime against not only the individual, but against the race, to impede the development of talent, or deprive a whole people of the means of pushing forward on the onward march towards —"

But here the doctor paused. He was brought up face to face with the sudden question — What was the end to which the race was tending? But he doubled back, like a wise man.

"Whilst all that is true, the evolution of all things in Nature proves that she is working out the problem of how to find what is most noble or beautiful in her children. She sits with her face to the wall, on which her models are hanging, and she knows nothing but blindly to imitate that model in the work which lies in her lap. Of course, it is failure after failure, which she flings aside with a certain scorn. And then, one

day, she creates the perfect type, and rests to contemplate her work."

"And that, too, goes into the dust heap?" said Mr. Hunt.

"Yes! after it has served its purpose."

"And that is?"

"To exist; to prove the fertility of Nature; to breathe, live in solitary greatness, self-sufficing, unconsciously beautiful, and then — to pass."

"Without the slightest influence on the world of men?"

"Not the slightest. I mean, of course, in a vast multitude of cases. Of course, a great poet, a great statesman, cannot exist without influencing his generation. But, if you read history aright, you will see how tenuous and weak such influence has been. You hear of men moulding a nation's destinies and all that. It means nothing—absolutely nothing. Mother Nature creates for her own amusement—just to try if her hand has kept its cunning; and when she turns out a great being, and finds that he corresponds with her type, she is content, and goes on for another space, turning out botches or mediocrities."

"'Pon my word, doctor," said Father Dillon, "you speak like a confirmed materialist. But, fortunately, your words carry their own refutation. I don't know who this Dame Nature is. I have never seen her. You say she works with her face to the wall, and her back turned towards us. But of course, this is all figurative, and poetical, otherwise we should quarrel. But, to come down to a question we may debate: Do you still hold that the world knows nothing of its greatest men?"

"Indubitably. Do you mean to tell me that these puppets that strut across the pages of history — your Napoleon, your Shakspeare, your Milton, your Gladstone—are the best work of—let me drop the absurd metaphor about Mother Nature—the Most High? Don't you know that as His Hand hides the diamond in the veldt, and the gold in the quartz of the rock, so he hides all his best and greatest work in human souls?"

"Of course; now we're coming back to prose and reason," said Father Dillon. "But you cannot hold for a moment, my dear doctor, that meaner or lesser souls are flung 'like rubbish to the void?'"

"No, no!" said the doctor, confused. "There we're drifting into theology, and I don't want to lose myself there. But I still maintain that great souls are born, live, come to maturity, pass, without the slightest recognition from their fellow-men, and without the slightest influence on humanity."

"There is a good deal in what the doctor says, Father Dillon," said Hester Hope, "although I had great misgivings about him a few minutes ago. There is no doubt that there are hundreds and thousands of pure and holy souls that are quite unrecognised during their lives, and even after death. We have all known them. And history, or rather literature, records not a few."

"Ha! quite so," said the Professor, breaking in with his usual enthusiasm. "I have just been reading Stevenson's Letters — you know Robert Louis Stevenson?"

He had turned towards Miss Fraser.

"Rather!" she said, with a little shrug of protest at such an absurd question. "We Scotch do not fail to know and appreciate our best and wisest men."

"Quite true, indeed," said the Professor, abashed. "I should have remembered. But, as I was saying, I just read lately in Stevenson's Letters a word of his about a friend — I think his name was Walter Ferrier. He uses the singular expression: 'I never knew a man so superior to himself as Walter.' It struck me as curious; but I think I apprehend the meaning."

"Probably it means," said Miss Fraser, "that the man didn't do himself justice."

"Exactly. He never gave of all he was worth. He hid it. And you know the world takes men, not for what they are worth, but just for what value they set on themselves."

"But isn't that pitiable," said Miss Fraser, "that we should

meet and address in every-day life souls of surpassing worth and never know it? Is this a false humility, or pride, or what?"

"No," said the doctor, "it is simply the truth — that one infallible mark of genius. All genius is humble, knowing by the force of genius its littleness in the universe. And hence you never find a great man putting on the peacock's feathers. Kings of men don't go around with crown and sceptre. They are content to be recognised by their fellow kings. It is only the mountebanks, and their name is legion, that put on gold-tags and tinsel."

"Yet is it not melancholy that we should not know our masters?" said the Professor. "In that letter of Stevenson about Ferrier he says: 'It makes me rage to think how few knew him, and how many had the chance to sneer at their better.' And is it not galling to see the groundlings and hinds and the whole *canaille* of humanity jeering and mocking at hidden kings? One does not like to be kicked to death by wild asses. I'm sure, if I could bring myself to believe that I had any worth, I shouldn't mind being judged by my peers. But to be criticised by every schoolboy who is still smarting from the ferule would wear away the patience of Job himself."

"Ah, you lack the first gift of the gods," said Mr. Hunt, "and the greatest."

"What is it?" said the Professor.

"Serenity," was the reply.

SESSION ELEVENTH

"THERE was just one feature that reconciled me to the members of the *Ancien Régime* in France," said Father Dillon, holding up the cup of Sèvres china which the doctor had placed in his hands, "and that was their magnificent serenity under the horrors of the Revolution. It is quite impossible to pity them. They brought down the tempest on their heads. But, when it fell; when, day by day, the noblest families in France passed under the axe of the executioner, they went to death with a *sang froid* and a dignity that should have commanded the respect of the veriest Jacobin. Yes! *Serenity* — the calm fronting of horrors and death, is a grand thing. Some historians seem to be of opinion that it was only the king that failed."

"That's a mistake, or rather a calumny," said the Professor, warmly. "And it is a calumny that originated with English historians, who like to contrast the calm demeanour of Charles I. with the little scene that preludes the death of Louis XVI. But the truth is, that the French king was buoyed up, even to the last minute, with the hope of a rescue. And he thought that a final appeal to his people would have saved himself and his crown. He was a brave man. He showed it all through that dismal upheaval."

"Another case of a great man unrecognised!" said the doctor. "But serenity! — yes, ah! I believe that it is considered a mark of the highest breeding now, that you must be absolutely unemotional."

"Quite true," said Mrs. Holden, who was now on her own ground. "A perfectly-trained lady or gentleman never exhibits emotion, either of pleasure or pain, but is always calm and self-possessed."

"But," said Mr. Skelton, "if I want to laugh, why shouldn't I laugh? And if I want to be angry, why shouldn't I be angry? And if I want to applaud, why shouldn't I applaud?"

Mrs. Skelton darted an angry look at her spouse. Robert was always giving himself away. She then looked anxiously at the doctor's wife, and caught her smiling.

"These things," said Mrs. Holden, sweetly, "are for the common people. No lady or gentleman nowadays laughs. It is a facial distortion that is unpleasant. The most one is allowed to do is to smile, and that very gently, I should say languidly."

"But — it," said the manager, "if a fellow tells a good story that would make the cats laugh, am I to look at him as if my mother-in-law was just dead? And if I hear a good song, or if my partner at a game of whist licks the whole table, what harm could there be in saying: 'Bravo, Jack! I never doubted you!'"

There was some consternation at this sally. Mrs. Skelton looked down at the white hand in her lap, and played with her rings. Miss Hope found it hard to keep back a smile. Mr. Hunt looked at the manager as at a museum curiosity. Father Dillon came to the rescue.

"It appears not, Robert," he said. "It would never do. It would disrupt society. You see the philosophy of it is this: It is two-fold — moral and physical. From a moral standpoint it has been found that all the troubles of life arise from unrestrained emotions. Anger, hatred, ambition, avarice, gluttony — all these things are simply ebullitions of animal nature; and as such are to be placed under peremptory restraint. To be greedy at dinner, to give way to passion, to cheat at cards, to shout loudly, to slap your knee, to clap your hands in a loud and unpleasant manner — all these are bad form. Isn't that the right word, Mrs. Holden?"

Mrs. Holden nodded.

"Now, everything that is 'bad form' must be avoided like the seven deadly sins, and so, if you are told a good story, you

must never laugh or applaud, but say, 'Ah!' or, 'How very interesting!' So, too, if you are insulted by some ignorant fellow, it would be 'bad form' to get into a passion, or retort angrily. You should look at him superciliously, and say, 'Really, how very amusing!' You see in this way you keep an undisturbed serenity, which is the tradition of the aristocracy in every land."

Robert Skelton was looking at the priest in a puzzled manner. He didn't know whether his good friend was sermonising or jesting. He was on the point of saying something, but Father Dillon went on, blandly:

"Then, from a physical standpoint, emotionalism is to be deprecated. There's nothing so wearing on the nervous system as strong emotion. Doctor, I'm intruding on your department; but you don't mind?"

"Not in the least," said the doctor. "We are not a bit jealous of our privileges. Go ahead!"

"H'm! I'm not so very sure of that," said the priest. "But I accept the gracious permission. Now, I say that uncurbed or unrestrained emotion has a most ruinous effect on the great life centres of the system. For example, worry, say about an overdue bill, Robert, or the sudden collapse of a debtor, or an unexpected visit from the inspector, seems to affect only the brain. The evil thing travels around with you, and seems to affect only your sleep. But, as a matter of fact, it spoils your digestion, and weakens the walls of the heart. So, too, if you get into a passion. A customer will not meet his bill, or a depositor suddenly takes out his little earnings, and transfers them to a rival bank. You are naturally angry. If you have not acquired the suave manners of good society — of course, I'm only making a supposition — you fume and rage, and perhaps use cuss-words and other emphatic expressions. What are you doing? Promoting congestion of the brain, and dilatation of the arteries, with a chance of generating an aneurism, or inducing apoplexy."

"Go on, Father Dillon," said Mr. Skelton. "I'm with

you so far. But where's the harm in an honest and hearty laugh?"

"Why, man," said Father Dillon, "laughing is suicidal. It is not only a vulgar contortion and distortion of the features, a horrible and unnecessary exhibition of teeth and gums and all the dread apparatus of the mouth, but it imperils life. How often have you heard people say: 'I nearly died laughing.' 'I killed myself with laughing.' The meaning is clearly that if ever you give way to violent and unseemly laughter you are in proximate danger of an untimely and perhaps unprovided death."

"Then, by Jove," said the manager, "I shall have to tell the Major to give up his good stories, because, if your coffin was made you'd have to laugh at them."

"I'm afraid that old Major is a very vulgar man," said Mrs. Skelton. "He really takes too much brandy, and he says rude things."

"I am afraid," continued Father Dillon, gravely, whilst, however, a meaning smile seemed to play around his mouth, "I cannot convert Mr. Skelton. But, now, to still further exemplify the subject, if I may intrude upon another sanctuary, that of literature, where our friend, the Professor, is high priest, is it not the case that the very perfection of high literature is its reticence? If I read aright, every critic seems to say that redundancy, or excess, or extravagance of any kind is the one thing to be deprecated in writing. Every young writer is recommended to be merciless towards his adjectives; isn't that so?"

He had turned towards the Professor.

"Quite so, Father Dillon," said the Professor. "Stevenson, whom I quoted before, said somewhere: 'There is but one art — to omit! Oh! if I knew how to omit, I would ask no other knowledge. A man who knew how to omit would make an *Iliad* of a daily paper.' And really, that is the charm of Stevenson — his reticence, the things he doesn't say."

"And yet," said Mr. Hunt, now joining in the debate, "how

does it happen that the one man who is most reticent, who packs a universe of thought into a mere satchel of words, is yet the master of all emotionalism, the magician who plays on the strings of the human heart as if it were a violin?"

"But is that so?" said the Professor. "Is Shakspeare — of course it is Shakspeare you mean, so very economical of language? Is there no redundancy of metaphor or antithesis there?"

"Absolutely none," said Mr. Hunt. "Read those 'Sonnets' which are the very reflex of his mind, as they are the masterpieces of his genius. You never cease wondering how any hand can press such vast and beautiful significances under such slender and apparently inharmonious words. Of course, it bears out Father Dillon's theory, that as reticence and reserve are the indispensable adjuncts of good breeding, so restraint in language — the art of omitting — is the one indispensable requisite of a good style. Who was it that said 'Woe to the man who has said all that he had to say on any subject?'"

"And yet you say he is the master of all human emotion," said Father Dillon. "Is there not some inconsistency here?"

"No," said Mr. Hunt. "It by no means follows that the master of emotion in others should be the victim or slave of such emotions. In fact, the traditional Shakspeare, as you know, is one that was absolutely removed far above all human feeling. His one characteristic was serenity. That placid bust is the symbol of it; and, so far as we can learn anything of his life, he seemed to be impervious to those influences that agitate ordinary humanity."

"That is, Shakspeare was superior to himself. He was greater than he knew," said Miss Hope.

"Quite so," said Mr. Hunt. "He never knew the vast extent and orbit of his intellect, nor the grandeur of his work, nor the eternity and universality of his fame."

"Don't you believe one word of that," said the sceptical doctor. "Every great man knows the extent of his genius.

If the man called William Shakspeare did not know the greatness of 'Hamlet' then you may be sure he never wrote it."

"If we are drifting into the Bacon-Shakspeare controversy," said Mr. Hunt, "I propose that we give it a special night, or series of nights, *Atticæ* or otherwise; and that we rank ourselves according to our sympathies, one protagonist on each side."

"If you do," said Mr. Skelton, "I shall promptly resign."

He spoke so emphatically, so energetically, that the *Sunetoi* stared at him in utter amazement. What interest could Bob Skelton have in such a subject? He might have heard of Shakspeare in some "far-off, unhappy time," but surely he never could have been interested in such an erudite and recondite controversy.

He explained.

"We have had enough of that infernal business down at the club," he said, "to fill twenty lunatic asylums. There's a half-daft fellow there who has got a bee in his bonnet if ever a man had, and it is Shakspeare and Bacon, and Bacon and Shakspeare from dawn to dark. Every fellow he meets he buttonholes, and bothers him for an hour or two about cryptograms and telegrams, and Ignatius Donnelly, and Mrs. Something-or-other. Say 'King' at Nap, and he has a handle of a quotation about King John as long as your arm. Say 'Knave,' 'Ah!' he says, 'that reminds me of something or other;' and he'll try and persuade you that 'Knave' isn't a — rogue, but something else. He came in the other night in great glee —"

"Robert," said Mrs. Skelton, in a sad and reproving voice, "I understood you had given up that club since you joined us."

"And who spoke of a club, my dear?" said Robert, actually on the spur of the moment. "Why, 'tis the tobacco shop on 'The Beach' I'm talking about."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Skelton. And the *Sunetoi* smiled.

"Well," continued Robert, "in he came in great delight.

‘Victory! Victory!’ said he, snapping his fingers. ‘I have found out the whole thing. Shakspeare is no more Shakspeare than Ben Jonson. Think of it, man! The fools never saw, all these years, the very clearest proof that it was Bacon wrote Shakspeare. I just stumbled across it. Here it is!’ and he pulled out an old tattered, yellow, disreputable thing, and began to read something about bacon-brains and mast, and the Lord knows what.”

Father Dillon looked inquiringly at the Professor. The Professor shook his head. Mr. Skelton was not discomfited.

“Will you give me a guarantee, Father Dillon,” he said, “on your word of honour as a priest, not to bring up that infernal subject here?”

“Well, I’m afraid, you know, Robert,” said the priest dubiously, “that I cannot promise to suppress any mention of such an interesting subject in such a learned society as ours.”

“Then I resign,” said Mr. Skelton. “I can stand a good deal, but I can’t stand that. It’s bad enough to have to meet this lunatic in the — ah — tobacco shop, but no human brain could hold together if it were brought up here.”

There were sundry appeals to Mr. Skelton to reconsider his resolution, but he was inexorable, and the meeting broke up.

Robert and the doctor stood on the doorstep of the doctor’s house, as the footsteps of the *Sunetoi* died away. Mrs. Holden and Mrs. Skelton were having a confidential chat upstairs.

“Look here, Bob,” said the doctor, “of course that was a pure invention of yours about that fellow and Shakspeare?”

“Not a bit of it,” said Robert. “Don’t you know Marshall, that cracked fellow that writes poetry for the Cork ——? That’s him. And, much as I hate him and his poetry, the next time I’ll meet him I’ll kiss him. I will, by Jove!”

“That’s rather foreign manners,” said the doctor. “You mean you’ll ask him to have a drink?”

“I will, and fifty,” said Robert. “I’m under everlasting obligations to that man, that saved me from that infernal ——. How do you stand it, Doc.?”

"Why, 'tis most instructive and interesting," said the doctor. "I'm surprised at a man of your education and refinement, Bob, not to have appreciated such a chance of self-improvement!"

"Self-improvement! Yes! ——— rot! Imagine a lot of grown-up men and women maintaining that a fellow mustn't laugh! And I heard that priest laughing so that he could be heard over at Roche's Point!"

"Ah, yes, but you see he's getting toned down," said the doctor. "He was young and inexperienced before. He knows better now. You'll never hear him laugh again."

"Well, thank God, I'm out of it," said Mr. Skelton, stretching hands of freedom towards heaven. "Now for freedom and the Major!"

Somewhat different were the remarks made by Reginald Hunt, as he walked slowly with Hester Hope up along the terraced street that led to her home.

"I never dreamed that my little monologue on *Trismegistus*," he said, "would have ended in the Baconian controversy. I was illiberal, as the doctor said, but I thought it would please you."

"Please me?" said Miss Hope. "How? It is very kind of you to think of me, but how can the matter affect me?"

"Well, you know," he said, "there is a studied antagonism between your Church and these scientists, and I have been trying to express your views rather than my own."

"Ha!" she said. "And that's the explanation of 'Fra Alberico,' too?"

"Yes," he replied. "In fact, I have been trying to fathom your opinions — that is, your Church's, and I confess they are profound enough. Now, for example, I cannot understand your violent antagonism to science, even from a religious standpoint. Till science woke up the human brain from its torpor, man was the centre of the universe, the heavens a black pall, studded with light points. Now, he has gone forth on the wings of fancy, upheld by solid induction, unto the

remotest limits of being, walked amongst the fire-vortices of space, watched the creation, never-ceasing, never-resting of suns and systems, understood for the first time his own littleness, and the awful majesty of God."

The young man took off his hat, and looked around until he saw the Pleiades glittering above his head, and the giant bulk of the hunter, Orion, stretched along the Southern horizon.

"Yes!" he said. "Science has bade me go forth and measure myself with infinity, and proclaim that I am the greater. First, surprise; then, alarm; then, emotion; then, familiarity; finally, contempt and indifference — these have been my mental experiences. I found that I could measure and weigh and count the marvels of space. They cannot measure me!"

"But," said Miss Hope, "perhaps you misunderstand us, Mr. Hunt. Who revealed all this pomp and glory to you?"

"The one man who emancipated the human mind — Copernicus. It is the Copernican system that has revealed God to man, and man to himself."

"And you are aware that Copernicus was a priest of our Church, like Father Dillon, and that he dedicated his great book to the reigning Pope; that he wrote strongly against Luther and his Reformation; and that his own province was the last to throw aside the yoke of the Church?"

Mr. Hunt was silent.

"Read up a little now about the 'Starry Galileo and his woes,' and don't take all your Sunday-school theology and history as the last word to be said on these subjects. Good-night!"

SESSION TWELFTH

ROBERT SKELTON did not keep his resolution. Somewhat shamefaced, he had to admit to the doctor that he would return to the sheepfold.

"'Tis that little woman," he said. "She wouldn't let me. She's fully convinced that if I go to the club, and into the Major's company, it spells blue ruin."

"But you *do* go to the club, don't you?"

"Of course I do, man. How could I live otherwise? Besides, 'tis a question of business. I want to keep my customers on my hands. The directors would be angry with me if I gave up that club."

"I see," said the doctor. "But you're coming back to us."

"I am," said Robert. "The directors won't mind one night in the week, and there's no use in talking, I couldn't go against that little woman."

"Why, Mrs. Skelton is one of the meekest, gentlest women I ever knew," said the doctor.

"Of course she is," said the manager. "Sure, 'tis there the trouble lies. If she were one of your cross, determined, thunder-and-lightning old termagants, I could fight it out with her. But there is no use in quarrelling with these rabbits. They'll have their way, and that's all."

"'Tis just the same in the Bank," he continued. "If a fellow comes in and blusters and blows around, I stand up to him, and bring him to his senses in about five minutes. But if a poor, little, broken-down, smashed-up old derelict comes in, and asks for a bill, of course I refuse point blank. Then the fellow turns away sadly, and looks at his nails. Then, he begins to bite them, and I begin to give way. Then, he takes out a pocket-handkerchief in a half-ashamed kind of

way, as if he was begging your pardon, and blows his nose, and begins to snivel. Ten to one, before the fellow is gone twenty yards I send the porter after him. And that's the way with my wife. She says nothing, but goes around in a dazed, half-sorrowful way, as if I were a lost soul; and, of course, I have to give in. I've gained a point, however."

"What's that?" said the doctor, curiously.

"I'm going to bring Marshall. He'll relieve the situation."

"Marshall? No! The cracked fellow out there at Rushbrooke? Why, he'll set everything topsy-turvy. Father Dillon won't have him!"

"Oh, but he will. Them's my conditions, and he said I was such a valuable member, and they should so regret losing me that he would made the sacrifice. We'll have some fun now. That's a consolation. By Jove, I'll bring the Major next."

"But, look here, Bob, that will never do," said the doctor. "'Twill break up the whole circus. And I don't know about the other ladies, but my wife won't go if you can't prove the quarterings, and all the other genealogical traits of this Marshall."

"Leave that to me," said Mr. Skelton. "If I haven't all the women at his feet, call me Davy."

Nevertheless, it was an experiment, for the *Sunetoi* were not only highborn, but fastidious, and the poet was as careless about his dress as Magliabecchi. What he lacked, however, there, he made up for by a courtliness of manner that was almost embarrassing.

Father Dillon led off the proceedings of the Twelfth Session.

"I think," said he, "we would make a fatal mistake if we passed from subject to subject in these our meetings too lightly. It is true of science, and every other subject that can interest the human mind, that it is wiser to let it alone, if we do not penetrate it deeply. It is not of music, or poetry alone it may be said:

"'Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.'

Now, there were a few points touched upon rather lightly at our last meeting which deserve a fuller recognition. For example, looking over old Horace the other evening, I came across two lines — one confirming the theory of reticence or restraint in writing:

“Quicquid præcipies, esto brevis; ut cito dicta
Percipiant animi dociles, teneantque fideles;
Omne supervacuum pleno de pectore manat.”

The other line seems to controvert the position taken up by Mr. Hunt, namely, that to excite emotion in others an author need not be necessarily subject to such emotions in himself. It runs thus:

“Si vis me flere, dolendum est
Primum ipsi tibi; tunc tua me infortunia lædent.”

“I think you’ll find, Father Dillon,” said Mr. Hunt, “that the entire passage from which you have taken a line refers to the actor on the stage, not to the author in his chamber. There can be no discussion on that point.”

“I must confess,” said the doctor, “that I have seen hundreds of stage-performances in my time, and although I have often had a hearty laugh at some clown or columbine, I could never shed a tear at so-called tragedy.”

“I suppose,” said the Professor, “they didn’t observe the proprieties, as laid down in Hamlet’s advice to the actors; and which Shakspeare culled from his own experience.”

Robert Skelton smiled at the word “Shakspeare.” He thought he saw the great deeps opening up.

“I—may I—of course, I am only a neophyte, and should be dumb,” said Mr. Marshall, in a most humble and deprecatory manner, “but may I make a remark about that last sapient observation?”

“Certainly, Mr. Marshall,” said Father Dillon. “The utmost liberty of discussion is permitted here.”

“The ladies do not object?” said Mr. Marshall, opening

out his hands, and taking in all the ladies in one elaborate bow.

"Not at all, go ahead, man," said the doctor, brusquely.

"Well, if I am not very much mistaken," said Mr. Marshall, still very humbly, "that passage incorporated in Hamlet was — well — let me say borrowed by the illustrious phantom called Shakspeare from a certain Ned Alleyn, an actor. At least, there is extant a letter written by one Peele, a dramatic poet, to our good friend, Marlowe, in which he says that at a merry meeting at the Globe this Ned Alleyn did not scruple to accuse the great William of having built up the passage in Hamlet from various conversations that had passed between them, and wherein the speaker had expressed these ideas. The illustrious Will was furious, but Ben Jonson stepped in, and confirmed the matter by saying: 'This affair needs no contention. You stole it from Ned, no doubt; do not marvel; have you not seen him act times out of number?'"

"How very wonderful!" said Father Dillon.

"How very surprising!" said the Professor.

"How strange!" said Mrs. Holden, looking dubiously at Mr. Marshall's boots.

"Who'd have thought it?" said Miss Fraser, looking at the Professor, as if she wished him to challenge the assertion.

Miss Hope looked at Mr. Hunt. He had been trying to take Marshall's measure, and had satisfied himself that he was only a poet, and harmless.

"The letter," he said at length, "quoted by our friend, is a forgery — one of George Stevens. You will find it in every catalogue of *Literary Forgeries*."

Mr. Marshall bent forward, and with his hands on his knees, was staring with all his might at this beardless boy, who had pulled down his castle so easily.

"Sure?" he said, at length.

"Quite sure," said Mr. Hunt. "But perhaps Mr. Marshall, as a Shakspearean scholar, would give us his opinion as to the point mooted by Father Dillon, or the doctor's experience.

You have witnessed all the plays of Shakspeare, Mr. Marshall, and, I presume, in the hands of, at least, some consummate actors. Have you been ever affected by them?"

"I suppose I would have been," said Mr. Marshall, "but, you see, I have generally had a chat with the performers in the green-room beforehand. That spoils the illusion. Besides, I can always steel myself against such things. I can always argue: 'What is Hecuba to me, or I to Hecuba?'"

"You are fortunate," said Mr. Hunt. "We have now two hardened infidels on our hands—the doctor, by nature; Mr. Marshall, from experience."

"Why, 'tis from experience I speak, Mr. Hunt," interrupted the doctor. "Or rather, the reasoning that comes from experience. I see there on the stage a man, or woman, who, I know, is paid for that performance. The higher the salary, the greater is my incredulity. I know that that distinguished lady or gentleman dined well an hour ago. I know they have no more interest in that drama than I have in the morning newspaper. I know that they are whispering comical 'asides' to each other during the most tragic scenes. I know that the prompter is just there behind the wings putting the words into their mouths. I know that when the drop-scene falls they will have glorious fun behind the scenes, with the champagne foaming in their hands, whilst silly women are blubbering there in front. And, knowing all that, do you think it possible that I can allow myself to be affected by such palpable histrionism?"

"And yet —?" said Mr. Hunt, and stopped.

"I heard a strange story some time ago," said Father Dillon, "which will throw some light on this matter. I do not vouch for its truth. I only tell it as it was mentioned to me. A certain great Shakspearean actor was starring in the American cities some years ago, and during his very brilliant tour from theatre to theatre he happened to be a guest at a dinner table to which the Catholic bishop of the place was also invited. Some discussion, similar to ours, must have arisen, and the

bishop, like our good doctor, declared that no human mimicry could move him to tears. The artist accepted the challenge, and requested but five minutes' preparation. He then returned with a copy of Shakspeare, and merely read the two scenes from King John — the appeal of Constance before the king and the cardinal in Act. III., and the scene between Hubert and Arthur in the fourth Act. The bishop stood the first very well, but he had to run out of the room before the end of the second reading."

"Ah! he was an old softy!" said the doctor. "He had no right to take the mitre. Bishops shouldn't be made of such perilous stuff."

"No one can resist child-poetry," said Miss Hope. "I cannot approve of Swinburne, but I forgive him a good deal of his paganism for the sake of his child-poems. No man ever sang of the sea and the child as he."

"Then you consider yourself absolutely impervious to emotion?" said Mr. Hunt, addressing the doctor.

"Oh, no!" said the doctor. "You quite misunderstand me. I've got my own sins, like other people, but I'm not going to cry over imaginary evils. The realities of life touch me sometimes; the imaginary not at all!"

"This is a little poem," said Mr. Hunt, slowly disengaging his pocket book, and taking out a crumpled note. "It is not my composition, altho' written in a metre which I affect. It has a history, but I prefer to let it speak for itself. Will you be good enough to read it, Doctor?"

"Oh, no, no!" said the doctor, hastily. "I don't care for poetry, and I'm not a reader. I wouldn't do it justice."

"Well, Father Dillon?" said Mr. Hunt, looking towards the priest.

"I'm afraid," said Father Dillon, taking the paper, "that if it is sentimental it is not in my line. I see — no, it would never do for me," he continued, after scanning the first verse. "Perhaps the Professor?"

But the Professor said he had taken cold coming down in the

5.20 p.m. from Cork, and his voice was husky. He added that it would be always prudent to sit with one's back to the engine.

"Unfortunately," said Mr. Hunt, "it is supposed to be spoken by a gentleman, and hence I cannot ask any of the ladies to do us the pleasure."

"Perhaps Mr. Marshall would make his *début* by reading for us," suggested Father Dillon.

Mr. Hunt seemed to hesitate, but he could not withdraw the invitation. He held the paper towards Mr. Marshall. The latter took it, looked over it in silence for a few minutes, and said:

"'Tis rather pathetic, I think. I doubt if I can do it justice."

"Try!" said Mr. Hunt.

And Mr. Marshall, one hand on his knee, and the other holding the paper aloft beneath the light, read in a deep, soft, baritone voice:

BABETTE

I

Baby, and Baby, and Baby, hath Heaven lent you to-night
Out from its ranks of seraphs to bless an old man's sight?
I thought I had said Good-bye! and for ever long ago,
When I kissed your cold dead lips, and the gold on your forehead of snow.

II

Life is a dream, and Death is a Dream in a turbid sleep,
He hath given his angels watch and ward over men to keep;
And the laughing angels, too, must play with the children of men,
Weaving fancies and visions beyond the mortals' ken.

III

Ah! but 'tis tragic play; as witness with you and me,
They wove their charms around us, and wrapped us in mystery,
And I was dreaming this long while past that you, Babette, were
dead;
As if Death could ever close such eyes, or uncurl the rings on your
head.

IV

Never! You never died. You were always with me as to-night,
When the flames leap up to challenge the starry and lambent light
Of eyes that are blue as the violets, washed in the April rains,
And the dust of the March is gone; and the sweetness of Spring
remains.

V

There, the old trick again! clutching those tiny toes,
And asking of deep, dead things which never the wisest knows;
Why? and why? and why? 'tis ever with mortals thus —
Child of three and century sage — puzzled and curious.

VI

The little shirt falls down, and opens the milk-white neck,
Where the golden curls riot, without or order or check,
And the sweet blue eyes are wandering, like hounds on an ardent
chase
From fire to picture, picture to fire, till they rest on my watching
face.

VII

'Sh! See who's behind you! Baby, 'tis time for bed;
Time for the clean, cool sheets, and a rest for a curly head;
Don't look around! 'Tis Mamma! And Mamma is very cross!
(God! who shall measure my pain, my sense of the double loss?)

VIII

Come, little man, and hide! Here, I will fold you around.
'Sh! For Mamma is sharp; she can hear the faintest sound;
At least from her baby's lips; the lips she has kissed so oft,
While they babbled of baby things, and felt so smooth and so soft.

IX

There, curl up in my lap. The night is dreary and long,
E'en though the sweet, cool dreams come down with the angels'
song;
Curl up those little limbs, and hide the sunniest head.
There, Mamma! Baby is gone to his nest in his cradle-bed.

X

Am I mad? Or do I dream? Is my brain a-whirl to-night?
Is it nought but a vision shadowed on the dark by the red firelight?
Gone are mother and babe; and the terrible fact remains
Of a lonely room, and a lonely man, and the swish of December
rains.

XI

Phantoms we are, and phantoms we vainly and ever pursue;
No wisest man as yet hath sifted the false from the true;
But if the visions that lingered behind my fireside chair—
The wraith of a sainted mother, of a Babe with sunlit hair

XII

Are only the play of the spirits that mock the anguish of men,
Drawing shadows and lights with alas! too certain a pen;
May God give them human hearts, as He gave to His Son, who
wept
For the lonely sisters, and raised the girl from the couch where she
slept.

XIII

I have vowed and ever vowed that I never would forge the chains
Of human affection to mine, while ever the breath remains;
And I'll keep it for evermore; I'll keep it and never lack
The peace that flies the soul, that is stretched on the weary rack

XIV

Of a love that is lavished on mortals, and therefore passing and
frail;
I will keep my love for the spirits that are hiding behind the veil.
For the love of mortals, though frail, doth snap the strings of my
heart,
I'm a lonely man to-night, for that dream that will never depart!

SESSION THIRTEENTH

THE Professor and Miss Fraser were walking up and down the railway platform, the former waiting for the mail, that was to take him to Cork; the latter waiting for the same train that was to take her to Rushbrooke, where she was then staying.

"It was good of Mr. Hunt," she said, "to lend that poem. It has a history, clearly, and probably a pathetic one."

"Do you think you could call it poetry?" the professor questioned.

"That brings up the eternal question, 'What is Poetry?'" she answered. "Only yesterday I read somewhere how much Tennyson admired our Burns, but only his lyrical and love pieces, which he called transparent as a dewdrop, bright as a cherry, etc. He carefully excluded his longer and more serious poems, such as the 'Cottar's Saturday Night.' Wordsworth was also an admirer of poor Bobby, but only for his long poems. He thought his songs worthless. And Carlyle considered 'Tam o' Shanter' a great epic. But if to be deeply touched is a test of poetry, I confess 'Babette' touched me — and you, Professor!"

"How sharp you ladies are," he said. "I thought I kept myself absolutely impassive."

"Yes. But I noticed you shuffling in your chair, and putting your hand to your face," she said.

"It was kind of Father Dillon to ask poor Marshall to read that poem," said the Professor, anxious to get away from his own personality, "and he read it well. What a magic there is in the human voice!"

"Have you read any of Mr. Marshall's verses?" she asked.

"Only the classical poems in blank verse," he replied.

"What was your opinion of them?"

"I think if he lived in England he would rank amongst the very first of the minor poets. The very least I can say of them is that they have caught the very spirit of Greece and Rome."

"I am ever so pleased to hear you say so," she said. "I have cut them all out and pasted them into a scrap-book. Of course, no one reads them here?"

"Not one," he replied. "They wouldn't understand them. The wonder is that any editor inserts them."

"Would it not be kind to let Mr. Marshall know what we think?" she said.

"Yes," he replied, half dubiously. "It is so hard to speak of such things, but —"

"I shall tell him," she said. "Or, I shall get Father Dillon — by the way, what a kind, prudent, tactful man he is — to bring him out some evening. I won't let Mr. Hunt have all the glory to himself."

"Take care!" said the Professor. "Poets are very jealous. Here's our train."

When he opened the carriage door for her at Rushbrooke, she bade him good-night, and said:

"Perhaps you are right. I shall tell Mr. Marshall what the Professor of Philology in the 'Queen's' thinks of his little ephemerae."

He smiled, and drew back the door gently.

Mr. Marshall was also the subject of a confidential chat between Mrs. Skelton and the doctor's wife.

"Do you know, my dear," said the former, "I was very near giving way. It reminded me of poor little Cyril. And I think Robert was affected too. He said we must ask poor Marshall some day to dinner."

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Holden, "it was all very sad. I almost forgot his soiled collar. And the doctor said that such things should never be written or read. There's enough of tragedy in real life. But, about dinner, my dear — ahem!"

"I know your objection, dear," said Mrs. Skelton, "but I think we are quite safe. Of course, it would be dreadful to compromise ourselves with anyone we could not well recognise. But I think, notwithstanding all appearances, this Mr. Marshall is all right. Robert — you know managers have to make inquiries of each other — has found out that he is certainly one of the Marshalls of Marshallstown, one of whom married Lord ——'s daughter. There was a little romance about it, and I think some of those writing people brought it into a book —"

"Ah! I remember," said her friend. "I suppose 'twas that lovely story about Camilla. Wouldn't it be delightful if Mr. Marshall were Camilla's son, or grandson, or even grand-nephew?"

"All I know is that Robert thinks well of him. He says there's but one life between him and the Marshallstown property."

"My goodness — only one life?"

"Only one, and an idiot! And that one is threatened with decline and has to live abroad."

"Oh, then we must be civil to him. But those dirty nails, and — his cuffs! What kind of a servant does he keep, I wonder."

"Like all the rest, I suppose. But, in any case, you can't get these poets and geniuses to mind such things as decency and cleanliness. They're always up in the moon, you know."

"But, look at Mr. Hunt! He's a genius, I know. And he is quite fastidious in his dress."

"Ah, that's his English training, my dear; they make cleanliness their religion. I wish that our poor Irish would only imitate them. But that seems hopeless."

"And then, of course, there's Hester. Don't you think that her presence has something to say to it?"

"I don't know," said Mrs. Skelton. "I think Hester will enter religion."

"Be a nun? That would be too dreadful, and she drawing

on that young man with every little wile and artifice. Why, my dear, it would be shameful."

"Well, well, who lives will see," said Mrs. Skelton. "But now, my dear, Christmas is close at hand, only a bare ten days. I was thinking of having a house-party on Christmas Night."

"Oh, and so was I," said Mrs. Holden.

"And were you going to ask all the members of the — I can never remember that horrid name?"

"Yes, all! I'm afraid Father Dillon can't come because he is bound to dine with the Bishop, you know. But he may run down afterwards. A clerical dinner must be a stupid thing, and he's so clever!"

"Then you have issued your invitations?" said Mrs. Skelton, who was indignant at having been forestalled.

"N—no, not yet," said the doctor's wife. "I was just thinking over the matter. Could we compromise? There's New Year's Day, for example."

"Very well, then, I shall leave Christmas to you, dear," said Mrs. Skelton, amiably.

"Did you see that strange account in the paper yesterday," said the Professor, at the weekly meeting, and addressing the chairman, "of the discovery made by a French *savant* that this solid earth of ours oscillates almost like a liquid, and that its surface rises and falls fully six inches in every twenty-four hours?"

"I haven't seen it," said Father Dillon. "How strange!"

"Yes. And another Frenchman, an Abbé, maintains that it is quite a mistake to suppose that this earth is an oblate spheroid flattened at the poles. He says it is pear-shape, the thickest parts being in the northern hemisphere, and the southern hemisphere tapering down towards the South Pole. He seems to think that the conformation of South Africa and South America have a direct bearing on this theory."

"Have you seen that, Mr. Hunt?" said Father Dillon. "It is interesting, if true."

"I haven't seen the statements quoted by the Professor," said that young gentleman, "but —"

He stopped, and looked around.

"I hope," he continued, in a deprecatory manner, "it is not too presumptuous for me to say so, but I can hardly regard the discovery of that French *savant* as something original. The latter discovery by the French Abbé is undoubtedly subversive of all our ideas as to the structure and shape of the earth, and I should like to see how the theory is proved. But, if you consider for a moment the fact that most probably this globe of ours is a mass of incandescent gas, surrounded by a thin film of solid matter not more than twenty miles in thickness, and that this fiery mass not only swings on its axis with terrific speed, but is carried along through space with appalling swiftness, the wonder is not that its surface oscillates, and dips, and bends, but that it does not fly into fragments every moment."

"Then you think that our earth, instead of being the solid marble of our boyhood, is rather the elastic india rubber ball?"

"Undoubtedly. That just puts the matter in its scientific aspect. And you may have noticed that when an india rubber ball has been sped along from a tennis bat or a racket bat it certainly assumes a spheroid form, proving its uniform elasticity."

"And would this account for our earthquakes?"

"Of course. You hear now and again of great earth-cataclysms, but the seismographs of the world to-day record earthquakes, or rather earth-splits, every hour of the day."

"That is, this old earth of ours is cracking and splitting its surface every moment?"

"Certainly. The surface of the earth is changing every moment, not only through the slow process of geological transformations, but by the sudden and violent shocks it receives every moment. You may be quite sure that, were it not for that thick elastic pad, called our atmosphere, this ball of ours

would either fly to pieces, or blaze out into a meteor, and vanish."

"But that rising and falling of the earth's surface, and those oscillations," said the Professor. "How is it that we cannot perceive them?"

"Does a fly in the window-pane of a railway carriage perceive the vibrations of the express train, or has he any conception of the fact that he is moving and being carried along at a rate of sixty miles an hour?"

"Of course not," said the Professor.

"Well, we are the flies, buzzing around a little on that express train called the earth, which speeds along at eighteen miles a second."

"It makes us very small," said Mrs. Holden, laughing. "If we are only flies, Mr. Hunt, where's the use of — anything?"

"Ah, yes," said the young man sadly, "where's the use of anything?"

"Now, Mr. Hunt, I won't have these sighs," said Father Dillon. "We are here to search into everything, to probe everything, to get at the causes of everything; but I don't admit for a moment that we are going to be depressed by our investigations. How is it that the old lines run:

"*'Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas.'*"

"Why, Father Dillon," said Hester Hope, "these, I'm sure, are Mr. Hunt's ideas also. I have heard Mr. Hunt say that it is science, and science alone, that has enlarged our scope of vision, and by revealing the grandeur of the universe has also revealed the nobility of man."

"Quite true," said Mr. Hunt. "I cannot be a recreant to my own opinions. I still say that it is science that has magnified the universe, and with it the mind of man, because no matter how great and striking may be the revelations of science the mind mounts beyond them, and makes little of them. Take, for example, modern statistics, which this little inquisi-

tive being called man has compiled. It sounds quite astonishing that the salt in the ocean would make 4,800,000 cubes, each one mile in dimension; or that the rivers of the earth carry 5,000,000,000 tons of solid matter every year to the sea; or that the Mississippi alone carries down past New Orleans 98,369,000 tons of dissolved salts every year. Or again, if it be true, as it is, that the sea water contains one grain of gold to every ton of water, it would mean that there are thousands of millions of tons of the yellow metal held in solution by the ocean, the volume of water in the ocean being 302,000,000 cubic miles. Yet, when you have heard all this, your imagination leaps beyond it, and you regard it with indifference. Nay, even when we go out beyond this little moth-planet, and begin to measure space, at first the stretch of imagination fatigues us, and then we find that we are equal to it, and then that we are greater."

"Ah, yes!" said Mr. Marshall, who had been biting his nails all along in impatience about this glorification of science, and who now smiled, as if he were propounding a discovery. "There are some things, however, with which we cannot measure ourselves, and before which we sink down in abject humility, and yet how small they appear — a line of poetry, a flower, an autumn sunset, a child's face. You remember the lines of Shakspeare:

 "The singing masons building roofs of gold;"
or:

 "daffodils,
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty.'

There! You never cease wondering at these marvels of speech. You cannot measure yourself with these!"

"And why, Mr. Marshall?" said Mr. Hunt, smiling at such enthusiasm.

"Because," said Mr. Marshall, "you may unravel and discover the operations of science, and reduce them to certain

laws, such as gravitation, attraction, etc., but you cannot, if you labour for a century, discover the secret that created such lines as these. It evades you, it baffles you; and therefore, you feel you are not its equal. These are small things, these lines, and I could quote you many more. But they tower above you like the untrodden peaks of the Himalayas. The scientist is a mere digger and delver; the poet is a mystery and divine."

"Then you hold that a line of poetry is a greater thing than a star like Arcturus, or a Halley's Comet?" said Father Dillon.

"Undoubtedly," said Mr. Marshall. "And, just in the same way, there may be certain musical passages that are greater even than the genius of their composers, and before which even the mind of a Beethoven has sunk down in amazement. Do you think that Raffaele, when he finished his Madonna, did not fall down and worship it? You may be sure he did, and you may be sure that when the full splendour and magnificence of that pictured glory burst upon him he knelt down and whispered:

"Non nobis, Domine, non nobis,
Sed nomini tuo da gloriam.'"

"I must say," said Mrs. Holden in her severest tone, "that you gentlemen are oblivious of the most ordinary rules of politeness in quoting Latin before ladies. You were the first to offend, Father Dillon, and now Mr. Marshall. Really, it is nearly as bad as whispering in company."

Father Dillon took the rebuke with his usual serenity, but poor Mr. Marshall was desperately flurried. He was a neophyte, and did not understand the mysteries, least of all the mysteries of woman's mind, probably the most cryptic thing on this planet. He blushed furiously, and made a pretty and conciliating speech. Mrs. Holden was for some time inexorable, then she remembered Lord—— and the Marshalls of Marshallstown, and relented.

"I believe gentlemen are not permitted to make Latin

quotations in Parliament nowadays," she said, as if the House of Commons were summoned to support her indignation.

"There is some reason for that," said Father Dillon. "Three out of every four members would be unable to quote correctly."

"My! That is strange," said Mrs. Holden. "I heard the House of Commons styled the first gentleman's club in Europe."

"Always excepting the Army and Navy Club, and the Major, eh, Skelton?" said the doctor.

"Well, we won't discuss the matter," said Father Dillon. "But to come back for a moment to the thesis before the meeting, I should like to ask Mr. Marshall who is to decide what are great lines in literature, because I am not always prepared to bow down and adore the whims of the multitude, or the *dicta* of the critics. For example, I totally disagree with the opinions which are formed about the world's greatest books."

"Why, that's the subject of my paper this evening," said Miss Hope. "It is hard to be criticised on the spot, but it is harder to be anticipated."

And the chairman made the most profuse apologies, and Miss Hope read her paper, with the title, "What is a Classic?" the purport of which may be gleaned from the discussion at the next Session.

SESSION FOURTEENTH

"I SUPPOSE," said Father Dillon, opening the next Session, "that it is universally admitted that the highest compliment that can be paid to a book, or a poem, or an essay, is to discuss it. I am not an author, and therefore cannot testify to the pangs and pleasures of authorship. But I believe that the most acute suffering that can be inflicted on that deserving class is to receive their work in silence. Hence, the highest compliment we can pay to our members is to discuss their papers, and so I proceed to open the debate, if debate there will be, about Miss Hope's admirable paper. Miss Hope at once defined a 'classic' to be that work which has stood the test of time, and has been consecrated by the verdicts of generation after generation, until now it is niched safely in the great temple of human literature. There it is fixed in adamant, and it cannot be deposed any more, and for ever —"

"But, pardon me for interrupting you," said the Professor, "but I don't think it has been clearly defined who are the judges in each generation, or who are qualified to pass the final verdict. Is this a purely relative matter, like so many other things, depending on each one's taste or idiosyncrasy, or have the nations agreed on a fixed standard, like the metals of commerce, to test what shall be recognised as sterling literature or otherwise?"

"I should say so," said Father Dillon. "After all, in this matter we have to fall back upon the experts."

"And is there no choice allowed?" asked the Professor.

"Certainly," said the priest. "There is perfect liberty for everyone to select what pleases himself in literature —"

"No, no, that's not the point," said the Professor. "Of course, everyone has that individual freedom. But is it

competent for me to say: This book is a classic, because I like it; that book, usually called a classic, is one I thoroughly dislike? Because, to be very candid, and really there is very little candour in the world in this matter of taste, there are many books, styled classics, which I would regard as a thorough penance to have to read, and there are some books, utterly unrecognised, that have been a source of great pleasure and comfort to me; and again, I have had variable tastes during my life, and the books that pleased me in my childhood I could not read in my adolescence; and the books that pleased me in my youth I cannot read now."

"I don't know whether the Professor's experience is general," said Father Dillon, looking around inquiringly, "but I suppose in this matter we have to accept the verdict of the public."

"But, my dear Father Dillon," said the Professor, "what if the public is invariably wrong? For example, George Eliot was styled a 'classic' in her day. I am told no one reads her now. I have seen her 'Mrs. Poyser' held up as the most perfect example of humour in the English language. I confess I never could see where the humour lay, and I must also confess that I think her the most tiresome writer of modern times. Then, there is Dickens. Once in my youth I was enraptured with everything Dickens wrote. I thought he was the most perfect writer of the two great elements in dramatic literature — humour and pathos. Now, if I take him up, I perceive at once that he was a most inartistic writer, because he is redundant and repetitive beyond all patience — witness Mrs. Nickleby and Flora Casby, and a hundred more — because his pathos is artificial — no mature mind will weep over Little Nell or Paul Dombey in these days; and because his humour is burlesque and caricature, not the genuine, delicate humour of a Sterne or a Richter."

"But, my dear Professor," said Miss Hope, "if I may defend myself, although on my trial, you must remember that I do not consider either George Eliot or Dickens classics. The

final verdict is not yet given. They are *novi homines* as yet. We have not enrolled them amongst our nobles."

"Ah, quite true, quite true, Miss Hope," said the Professor. "But I am trying to gauge what is the final norm or standard of excellence in literature. Clearly it is not popularity, nor the current taste of one generation, nor individual taste. What, then, is it?"

"It is, as I have already stated in my paper," said Miss Hope, looking a little piqued at the Professor's persistence, "the concurrence of the public opinion of generation after generation, until there is no longer room for dissent."

"Then, if I cannot concur in the verdict of the ages, is it to be concluded that my taste is at fault, or that the general verdict is faulty and misleading?"

"Well, I can hardly suppose the latter," said Miss Hope, smiling.

"Because I most certainly do not accept the general verdict on several books that are reputed classics; and on the other hand, I consider many books masterpieces, such as several of the plays of Euripides, which are scorned by so-called critics. I think the French drama, always excepting Molière, deplorable. I think Calderon the greatest European genius after Shakspeare: and I'm not quite sure that I should place him after Shakspeare. I think Goethe's 'Faust' utterly condemnable, except for the opening prologues. I think the Second Part utterly inexcusable. I could never get beyond the Fourth chapter of 'Don Quixote;' I detest Montaigne; I think the books of Boccaccio and Rabelais should be burned by the common hangman; I had rather read the 'Comus' of Milton than 'Paradise Lost'; I think the 'Faerie Queene' unbearable, and I should like to see with my own eyes the man who had scrambled through the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' I think 'Julius Cæsar' the greatest of Shakspeare's dramas; and I think there are lines in 'Marlowe' that Shakspeare could not have written. I think Sir Thomas Browne the greatest of English essayists. I do not accept the criticisms of Hazlitt —"

"Did you ever read 'Alice in Wonderland?'" said Mrs. Holden.

There was a slight titter that embarrassed the Professor a little.

"No," he said, "I cannot say that I did. Once or twice I took up that book in a friend's house, opened a page or two and put it down. I saw enough to convince me that it was possibly the wildest farrago of unlicensed nonsense that ever came forth from the human brain. And —"

"The children love that book," said Mrs. Holden. "It was written for children."

"I was just about to say," said the Professor, "that children declare the book intolerable. I know one little girl who hides it under the sofa pillows whenever she gets the chance."

"To have it all to herself, I suppose," said Mr. Hunt, smiling.

"Not at all, but lest her papa or mamma should ask her to take it up and read it for the edification of her brothers and sisters, who equally detest it. In fact, there is a childish conspiracy organised against the book."

"I think," said Miss Fraser, "that the judgment of a man like Lord Macaulay, who had read and remembered everything, and who was acknowledged to be a competent critic, should be regarded as final. At least, I always find it quite pleasant to be directed in my course of reading by some one whose taste is better formed than mine."

"I have no objection to such a course," said the Professor, "although I should suppose such guidance would be unnecessary in your case —"

The *Sunetoi* smiled, and there was a faint and quite genteel murmur of applause.

"But," continued the Professor, "the guide should be a safe one, and I don't know, in the whole of my experience of authors, a more unreliable, unsafe, and untrustworthy guide than the aforesaid Lord Macaulay."

There was a gasp of surprise, but the Professor went on:

"I always distrust preacher, teacher, or critic who is absolutely sure of himself, and who dogmatizes in such a manner that he leaves no room for a second opinion. I suppose such dogmatism offends my sense of pride, and I rise up in natural revolt against it. But I find invariably that modest men are right. I remember, and never without a sense of rising indignation, all the bitter and unjust things that were said against young poets in the commencement of the last century, poets that are now enshrined and immortal. And, when I find Macaulay and Matthew Arnold adopting the same tone of infallibility, I at once reverse their verdict in my own mind. I conceived an aversion to the 'Vicar of Wakefield' because Macaulay somewhere praises that book, and, if anything could add to my adoring appreciation of Shelley, it is the highly absurd censorship which Matthew Arnold assumes towards that poet and his works. Amongst our writers, I have seen nowhere such just and impartial criticism of our English poets as that of Mr. Lowell; and, of course, in France, Sainte-Beuve remains supreme."

"You seem to think, Professor," said Mr. Hunt, "that poets are not the best, or most impartial judges of poets."

"Certainly not. The very best proof of this is that poets are invariably the worst judges of their own work. You will hardly find a single case where the judgment of the poet and the judgment of the public is at one."

"But could not a poet be an excellent judge of other work than his own, even though he was blind to his own defects, or excellences?"

"Hardly. In fact, there is always war on Parnassus, and then, there must be bias and prejudice; or there is excessive humility, and then there is warped judgment. Goethe regarded Byron as the meteor-genius of Europe. Byron retorted that Goethe was a demi-god. Neither of them dreamed that the thin, fragile spirit of Shelley was greater than either; neither did Shelley know it himself. Edgar Allan Poe, the first great master of form, foretold the genius

of Tennyson from 'Tears, Idle Tears,' but Swinburne can see no good in Emerson, because the latter had not the gift of poetical form. Robert Buchanan turns Wordsworth into prose, and sees in it only the preaching of a revivalist, and Cardinal Newman thinks Crabbe — good heavens! — one of the greatest of moderns."

"But do you think, Professor, that Cardinal Newman was a poet?" asked Father Dillon, who expected an emphatic affirmative, for his enthusiasm about the great Oratorian was unbounded.

"Emphatically no!" said the Professor. "I hope I am not wounding any religious susceptibilities —"

"Oh, no, no, no!" said Father Dillon, who was anxious to smother his mortification, "this is a question not of religion, but of taste."

"I am of opinion," said the Professor, "that the late Cardinal was too much of a dialectician to be a poet. Except Mr. Gladstone, I do not know of any public man in modern times who had such a talent for using language to conceal thought as your great Oratorian. I don't make this remark in a depreciatory sense, or as implying a lack of perfect candour and honesty. But there is a certain class of intellect that looks all round a subject and studies it from every standpoint, and cannot therefore express a direct opinion. These form the very worst witnesses in a court of justice, and are the despair of lawyers. They are cold reasoners, dialecticians, hair splitters. Probably they serve their own purpose in life. But between such logic-choppers and the magnificent idealism of a poet there is a universe that cannot be bridged over. They lack the *æstrum*, the Divine fury of the inspired singer."

"I thought 'The Dream of Gerontius' was already recognised as a classic," said Father Dillon. "And surely 'Lead Kindly Light' is the most universally popular hymn in the whole world."

"Hymn, rhythmical prayer, aspiration? Yes. Poem?

No!" said the Professor. "I am awfully sorry to have to say such things, but there is a tendency in every religious organisation to attribute to its leaders not only their own specific merits, but all other gifts of the Spirit. I think this a mistake. I grant your great Cardinal pre-eminence as preacher, writer, reasoner, historian, but he had not the gift of song, any more than Ruskin or Carlyle. Nature is economical and impartial. She divides her gifts among her children. But we are wandering away from the subject. I think we were discussing the question whether poets can be judges of poets. Now there comes to my mind a curious instance of how poets differ. You are aware that Ben Jonson was a little jealous and arrogant, and at one time he wrote an ode in which he threatened to quit the stage —"

"That's mine! That's mine!" shouted Mr. Marshall, springing up, his eyes blazing, his short fluffy hair standing on end. "How dare you, sir? That's my property. I appeal to Mr. Skelton. Have you not heard me quote that ode, again and again?"

There was some consternation. Then, a lot of mutual explanations, and at length Father Dillon carried his proposition to adjourn the question to the next Session.

SESSION FIFTEENTH

It is fortunate that there are still in Ireland a few persons who can take life serenely, and pass over its little ruts and hindrances with philosophic calmness. The good young priest who was the presiding genius at these meetings was a great deal concerned about the little scene that took place at the last Session, but he was greatly relieved to find at the next meeting that everything was suave and peaceful, and that Mr. Marshall and the Professor had exchanged confidences that led to mutual understanding.

As if to emphasise the importance of the occasion, Mr. Marshall appeared before the *Sunetoi* with a high, clean collar, and clean cuffs, a little frayed, however, from the wash and the abrasions of time. He looked a little doubtfully towards the Professor, and the Professor looked at him, as if questioning which of the two should open the ball. At length Mr. Marshall, with a faint blush spreading over his handsome features, and making the old man beautiful, said:

“I have again to apologise to the ladies and gentlemen here present, more especially to the ladies, for the very unseemly interruption into which I allowed my feelings to betray me at our last meeting. It was an ill return for the high compliment of being admitted into such a charming and intellectual circle. I can only promise that it shall not occur again. To explain my — well, undue excitement, I may say that I have been for some years interested in what is called the Shakspeare-Bacon controversy, and I have read up all that is written on that obscure but fascinating subject. I — ah thought (of course, it was an unworthy suspicion) that the Professor, in laying down the principle that a great dialectician cannot be a poet, was aiming at my pet theory that

Francis Bacon, Baron of Verulam, was verily the chief author of those works which have come down to us under the name of William Shakspeare, for, of course, all the arguments advanced against Cardinal Newman as a poet told with equal severity against Bacon. And then came that allusion to Ben Jonson's ode, which I had hitherto regarded as my own specific discovery. How blind we are!" said Mr. Marshall, stretching out his hands in a deprecatory manner. "How blind! I was quite sure I had found a something that would close the tremendous controversy for ever. And lo! the Professor quotes the important Odes as a mere war of words between the Elizabethans; and refuses to see in these the practical solution of the great puzzle."

"I have asked Mr. Marshall," said the Professor, "to be good enough to quote the lines in which he thinks the important secret is hidden, so that our learned circle may judge for themselves. I am sure that neither Mr. Marshall nor I would care to go beyond the verdict of our Society."

"Certainly not," said Mr. Marshall. "But I may mention that I have already communicated the important discovery to a well known literary journal, and have received hundreds of letters thanking me for having solved this vexed question for ever."

The *Sunetoi* sat up in their chairs, eagerly intent on hearing and discussing this important event in English literature. Robert Skelton, however, was trying to destroy his eyesight for ever in winking at the doctor, who, however, refused to look his way.

"Let me premise, ladies and gentlemen," said Mr. Marshall, "that everything connected with this obscure question is necessarily cryptic and hidden. I suppose to the end of time people will discuss the important question, who is the A. H. of the 'Sonnets,' or the 'Dark Ladie.' Hence, if we are to get at the root of the matter, it must be understood that the most we can expect is a hint, a glimpse, a faint suggestion, which, however, may and does reveal the whole truth. If I

walk down the street, and scent the odour of a vile cigar, I know that some vulgar fellow has passed that way. If I notice the echo, the far-off and dying *aura* of Eaux de Parme, or Violettes de Chypre, or if I hear on the still air the faint *frou-frou* of 'broidered silk, or *crêpe de Chine*, I know that a lady has passed by *avec la souplesse de l'osier*. So, too, in literature, one gets a hint, a breath, and lo! you know at once what is indicated, as infallibly as if the fact were stated categorically. Now, our good friend, Ben Jonson, was about to leave the stage, sick, I suppose, of the fraud and hypocrisy of the whole thing, and he wrote a farewell ode which one of his contemporaries styles 'A Magisterial Ode,' in which he says:

"Come, leave the loathed stage,
And the more loathsome age;
Where pride and impudence (in faction knit)
Usurp the chair of wit;
Inditing and arraigning every day
Something they call a play.
Let their fastidious, vaine
Commission of braine
Run on, and rage, sweat, censure and condemn;
They were not made for thee — less thou for them.

"Say that thou pourest them wheat,
And they will *acorns* eat;
'Twere simply fury, still, thyself to waste,
On such as have no taste!
To offer them a surfeit of pure bread,
Whose appetites are dead!
No, give them *graines their fill*,
Husks, draff, to drink and swill.
If they love lees, and leave the lusty wine,
Envy them not their palate with the swine.'

That all this is pointing at the playwright, Shakspeare, is shown in the following stanza:

“‘No doubt some mouldy tale
Like *Pericles*, and stale
As the shrieve’s crusts, and nasty as his fish —
Scraps out of every dish
Thrown forth, and rak’t into the common tub,
May keep up the play-club:
There sweepings do as well
As the best ordered meale,
For who the relish of these guests will fit,
Needs set them but the almes-basket of wit.’

Now, ladies and gentlemen, mark these words, ‘mouldy tale like *Pericles*,’ ‘fish-scraps out of every dish,’ ‘rak’t into the common tub,’ ‘almes-basket of wit.’ Clearly these words signify that the plays, like ‘*Pericles*,’ then before the British public, were simply a *hotch-potch*, a kind of Irish stew, made up of the alms thrown in by all who were anxious to set up the handsome Shakspeare above his cumbrous rival, Ben Jonson.

“Well, there was a reply to this rather bitter valedictory, written by one Owen Feltham, which throws a little more light on the subject. In the fourth stanza some remarkable lines occur. Ben alluded to ‘plush and velvet men’ in his Ode, and in the retort are found the following significant lines:

“‘There are plush who scorn to drudge
For stages, yet can judge
Not only poets’ looser lines, but wits,
And all their perquisites;
A gift as rich as high
Is noble poesie;
Yet, though in sport it be for kings to play.
'Tis next mechanicks’ when it works for pay.’

Clearly the words ‘who scorn to drudge for stages,’ ‘yet can judge not only poets’ looser lines, but wits,’ refer to some person far above the position of a mere playwright. And again, the words ‘though in sport it be for kings to play, ’Tis next mechanicks’ when it works for pay’ apply to someone

who ranked with kings, and who was not obliged to labour at the stage for the pay of a mechanic. Feltham, attacking Ben Jonson, did so from the shelter of princes' patronage, and with the armour of Goliath.

"Finally, there was a rejoinder to this from Randolph, a friend and admirer of Ben Jonson's genius:

"Ben, do not leave the stage
Cause 'tis a loathsome age;
For pride and impudence will grow too bold
When they shall hear it told
They frighted thee; stand high, as is thy Cause!
Their hiss is thy applause;
More just were thy disdain
Had they approved thy vein;
So thou for them, and they for thee were born
They to incense, and thou as much to scorn.'

Now mark the second stanza, and compare with the second stanza of the 'Magisterial Ode:'

"Wilt thou engross thy store
Of wheat, and pour no more,
Because their *bacon-brains* had such a taste
As more delight in mast —'

There is the climax, ladies and gentlemen! You see now that the playwrights who were contending with Ben were using, not their own brains, but the brains of a Bacon, first and greatest of poets, as of philosophers, and were placing in the theatrical mart before an admiring public the works which the great Chancellor disdained to acknowledge."

Mr. Marshall took out a red cotton handkerchief, and mopped his forehead. There was a suggestion of perfect ease, as well as triumph, in the gesture. The *Sunetoi* applauded decorously.

"It must have cost you an enormous amount of labour, Mr. Marshall, to disinter those poems," said Father Dillon,

admiringly. "Now I consider that that is the most difficult feature in authorship and literature—that searching and probing amidst the dust of libraries for long-forgotten poems, and then collating them and comparing them, and drawing important conclusions from apparently obscure premises."

"But you have no doubt, you can have no doubt, my dear Father Dillon," said Mr. Marshall, "about the absolutely mathematical proof I have given of the authorship of these plays. Mind, I do not include the 'Sonnets' or the 'Poems'—only the plays."

"Well," said Father Dillon, diplomatically, "as we arranged in the beginning of this most interesting discussion, I think we shall submit the question to the vote of the members, and I shall reserve my opinion till the last. What do you think, Professor?"

"I am hardly justified in offering an opinion," said the Professor, with unusual humility, "because I am like a jurymen, who begs to be excused because he has already made up his mind about the guilt of the prisoner. Now, I have never had the slightest doubt that it was the man, William Shakespeare, of Stratford-on-Avon, husband of Anne Hathaway, and afterwards burgher in his native town, who wrote the plays, poems and sonnets that have come down to us in his name. I have no more doubt about it than I doubt that Ariosto wrote the 'Orlando Furioso,' or Calderon the 'Autos Sacramentales.'"

"Well then, my dear sir," said Mr. Marshall, with some heat, "you will be pleased to hear that the whole weight of evidence, and, what is more, of deduction, is dead against you. What do you think, Miss Fraser? You are on my side, I know."

He was so eager, so desperate, that Miss Fraser did not know whether to laugh or be afraid. She compromised with a little smile as she said:

"I don't think our Bobbie Burns could have written those plays."

There was a look of blank astonishment on the faces of her hearers. Then Mr. Marshall saw the point.

"Quite so! Miss Fraser," he said, triumphantly. "And if Bobbie Burns, quite the equal in genius of the deer stealer and poacher of Stratford, and with a better education, could never, even to the wildest imagination of his compatriots and admirers, have written 'Hamlet' or 'Lear,' how can we suppose that the man Shakspeare was the author? That clinches the argument. After all, it takes woman's wit and intuition to strike out original arguments. I never heard that comparison before. It is simply admirable. You agree, Miss Hope?"

Miss Hope was smiling in a rather nervous manner. It was a critical occasion, and it was a question on which she had not quite made up her mind.

"Really," she said, "I have not been following attentively the argument. I have been thinking rather how we have drifted from the debate on my paper on to another question, whether a great reasoner can be also a great poet, and from that on again to the vexed question: 'Who was Shakspeare?' Of course I know that all discussions of this kind become rather desultory; and perhaps it is just as well they should be so. But I think that important question might be a subject for a special paper —"

"Ha! I see," said Mr. Marshall, "that Miss Hope is too kind. What do you think, Mr. Hunt?"

"Ladies first, please," said Mr. Hunt. "I am surprised at you, Mr. Marshall."

"I stand abashed and corrected," said Mr. Marshall. "Mrs. Holden, I'm sure you are on my side?"

"Well, really, Mr. Marshall," said that good lady, "I haven't given the subject much attention. My time is so engrossed — and then, I am interested in other matters, you know —"

"Mrs. Holden is an accomplished musician," said Father Dillon, coming to the lady's rescue. "If you would like to hear 'I know a bank,' or any other lyric of Shakspeare's — I

mean, of course, that are imputed to Shakspeare—there is no one can render them half so well as Mrs. Holden.”

“You know, Mr. Marshall,” said the lady, with a slight pout, “I’m not illiterate, I mean unliterary. I think literature is simply lovely, like carnations or sweetwilliam, or — everything that is nice, you know; but then — well, you must have time.”

“I quite agree with you, Madam,” said Mr. Marshall, “it needs time and training and experience. And it is just here that this modern world of ours is such an egregious and hopeless failure. It is a pushful, restless, fickle age, eager only to ‘get through’ some certain programme, and have done with it. It does not recognise the tremendous fact that whatever is worth doing is worth doing well; and whatever has to be done well must be done slowly and carefully. Nature is slow in her operations, painfully, laboriously slow. She does nothing in a hurry. She is eternal, and can take her own time. But men, probably because they feel their transience, want to cram eternity into an hour, and to grasp the universe with their baby-hands. Hence, we have ill-wrought and unstable work; hence, no culture, no refinement, for culture and refinement demand ease and leisure; and there is no room for such things in these hot and hasty days. There is only one race on earth that can do these things, I mean, do the work of life conscientiously and carefully, and that race is the German. They alone have the ancient faculty of being able to build the everlasting pyramid on the shifting sand.”

Mrs. Holden looked surprised, and not a little puzzled, to find that Mr. Marshall and herself were in thorough accord on such an important matter. She was delighted to find her skeleton-thoughts clothed in such a *Directoire* dress.

“Now,” continued Mr. Marshall, somewhat excited by his own eloquence, “I suppose not one in ten thousand would dream of searching the whole of Elizabethan literature to discover the real key to this vast enigma, and then undertake the labour of collating and comparing these remarkable odes

which I have had the honour of quoting, so as to find their secret significance. We talk so plainly — perhaps I should say in such a banal and literal manner — that we cannot understand that the Elizabethans spoke in charades, and that it was the chief amusement of life to send forth winged words, and get them back again. It was a kind of linguistic archery, where everyone sought to hit a certain gold spot with the arrows of language, or rather a kind of tennis, where the ball was tossed from mouth to mouth, and the loser was he who failed in repartee. We know nothing of that art now, when even the art of ordinary decent conversation has fallen into desuetude, but our ignorance explains why it is that we fail to grasp the deep significance of the literature that was contemporary with, and illustrative of, the Shakspearean drama. I feel that my poor life has not been altogether wasted since, as our good chairman has said, I have given years to the disinterring of these ‘Magisterial Odes,’ and commanded them to speak plainly on the ever-interesting problem. But — ” Mr. Marshall looked around apologetically, “I have not yet gleaned the opinions of the majority. Mr. Hunt, what do you hold?”

And Mr. Hunt said rather languidly:

“I remember seeing these Odes placed in juxtaposition, but I confess that I could not draw the admirable conclusions in which Mr. Marshall takes such legitimate pride.”

“In juxtaposition?” shrieked Mr. Marshall. “Never, sir! I have not put my ideas and discoveries in print as yet.”

“Then you may spare yourself the trouble,” said Mr. Hunt. “You can see them in a very handy and available book called ‘Disraeli’s Curiosities of Literature.’”

SESSION SIXTEENTH

"REALLY," said Reginald Hunt to his companion, as they strolled leisurely homeward that evening, "I was pleased to have been able to shut that man up. It was intolerable."

"Are you still pleased?" said Hester Hope sententiously.

"Why certainly," he said, "I cannot tolerate pretentious ignorance anywhere; and Mr. Marshall put himself beyond all law."

"Except one," said Miss Hope.

He looked at her inquiringly.

"You wounded the feelings of that poor gentleman in a deadly manner," she said, "and you gained a paltry victory. Was not your vanity gratified at too great a price?"

He was silent for a few seconds as they walked along.

"Yes, you are right," he said. "You are always right. It was a mean temptation; and I yielded to it meanly. But — then — if we are to allow everything to pass unchallenged, there will be no freedom of discussion; and we shall permit many mistakes and errors to creep in; and the whole thing will be a sham and a mockery."

"No!" she replied. "It need not become so. Of course, there must be discussion, and contradiction; but it is a great art to be able to discuss, and even contradict, without wrenching the nerves of others."

"Are you not placing charity before truth?" he asked.

"No," she replied. "I think truth is always first; but do you believe that the truth cannot be stated without unkindness?"

"Well, in the present instance," he said, "I am at a loss to see how."

"You might have passed it over," she replied. "Remember, you were not challenged for an opinion on these Odes; but as

to whether these Odes proved his case. It would have been quite easy, if it were necessary, to tell Mr. Marshall privately that these Odes were not quite so difficult of access as he implied. Probably, he would have acknowledged his mistake at our next meeting and gracefully (for with all his uncouthness he seems to be a gentleman) given you the credit of undeceiving him."

"Yes!" he said, "I give up the argument. You are quite right. I must now think of how I shall best make the *amende*. Will you help me?"

"You need no help," she said. "You will do what is right."

And the rebuked and censured man went away happy.

"I regret very much," said Father Dillon at the opening of the next Session, "that I have to bring against one of our members a charge of something very like prevarication."

He paused, and Mr. Marshall looked up confused; and a look of anxiety seemed to pass into the eyes and across the forehead of Hester Hope. She had already with woman's pitying sympathy taken the uncouth Mr. Marshall under her protection.

"At the last meeting, one of our members rather pointedly disclaimed all taste for literature or literary subjects. Now, that's not only a personal reflection on this august assembly; but it is a prevarication, an excess of modesty, a repudiation of gifts, which we cannot condone. Have I the consent of the meeting to read this production?"

There was cordial applause.

"The title of the poem is: 'White Jasmine.'"

"James," said Mrs. Holden, flushing scarlet, "how dare you? You opened my portfolio!"

"No! my dear," said the doctor composedly, "that valuable paper is mine. You gave it to me on the fifty-first anniversary of our wedding. I thought at first it was I who was the 'dear,' but, thank God, I'm not dead yet!"

"I object, Father Dillon," said Mrs. Holden. "It is too sacred. 'Twas written to an old school-friend. If I thought—"

Then Mrs. Holden took out her cambric handkerchief; and the good priest, touched by the gesture, folded up the paper and handed it to her.

"A thousand pardons," he said. "You are quite right. These things are sacred."

"It is too late now," she said. "The doctor says it is his property. Let him dispose of it, as he is mean enough to have shown it."

"Read the paper, Father Dillon," said the doctor quite coolly. "How innocent you young priests are!"

Father Dillon looked puzzled, staring from husband to wife, whilst the *Sunetoi* smiled. Then a great light dawned on him, and without further preface or apology, he read:

WHITE JASMINE

I

Can you remember, dear, that summer night
When the soft, purple twilight murmured down,
And sank in tranquil silence; and the light
Gleamed far and wide above the sleeping town?

II

We sat beneath the limes, whose fragrant flowers
Poured balm upon the still and half-warm air;
The young birds stirred within the lilac bowers,
And all was still and sweet; all sweet and fair.

III

The starry jasmine shone above our head,
The milk-white blossoms gleamed against the dusk,
And farther forth the swift, but noiseless tread
Of Night bruised out the roses' heavy musk.

IV

Clipped in a solid square, the laurel hedge
Shielded the closely-shaven lawn where you
Grudged the meek daisy e'en the narrow edge
Where in the Spring your favourite violets grew.

V

Yes! you were partial, and you did not like
Plebeian things, e'en those the poets name
Their "darlings." Gentle beauties did not strike
Your soul or senses into leaping flame.

VI

But you did sit quite still that Summer night,
And watched in silence the dumb, gleaming sky;
And now I know you felt the Infinite
With all its vast complexities was nigh.

VII

And you were quite content; and the gray dawn
Brought disappointment, when it broke, and showed
The sparkling flowers along the dewy lawn,
And the swift light along the valley flowed.

VIII

And the blue smoke curled up; and now and then
The voice of man or beast did shrilly break
On the sweet silence Nature holds, but when
The clarion cry of morn shouts, Awake!

IX

You did not like those sounds, nor light nor day;
You craved the dark, the silence, and the night;
I did not understand how closely lay
Your life-path and the pathway infinite.

X

Now I recall but one reluctant word,
A gasp of hope from some too meek despair;
There was a stifled cry from some far bird,
The jasmine dropped one pearl from her hair.

XI

You took it up. The milk-white star did shine,
You bade me breathe it; and it was then you said:

"The perfume parts not from its petalled shrine,
It bears its fragrance, though we call it dead.

XII

"Even so, the beauty and the sweetness live
Long after life. Upgathered with the soul,
The force God-given that did ever strive
To reach through cloddish earth the appointed goal

XIII

"Of every spirit that doth emanate
From the great centre of all living space,
Passes unbroken through the narrow gate,
And broadens into flowers of light and grace.

XIV

"Life fleets with the last sob. There is no Death.
So surely as the perfume clings to this
Frail, starry petal of the scented breath,
So life goes out with Death's enchanting kiss."

XV

How does it happen that I now recall
Thee that art gone beyond my ken and voice?
Because to-day from opened leaves did fall
The perfumed petal of thy midnight choice.

XVI

And lo! its fragrance was not dead; but all
The leaves were hallowed by the subtle scent.
The slender thing did there and then recall
That night which under stars and limes we spent.

XVII

Where art thou now? I know not, but I feel
That when the Book of Life shall ope for me,
I shall rejoice to find its leaves conceal,
Like this white jasmine, all that is of thee.

"Beautiful!" said Father Dillon, folding the dainty paper, alas! rather frayed and yellowed by the years.

"Beautiful!" echoed the *Sunetoi*.

"Look to your laurels, Mr. Hunt!" said the Professor. "We cannot judge of Mr. Marshall yet!"

"It would have been a crime to suppress that poem," said Mr. Hunt gravely. "As the British Government has never yet had the grace to appoint a Lady-Laureate, I shall now resign the myrtle in favour of Mrs. Holden."

"You shall do nothing of the kind, Mr. Hunt," said the lady, who, however, was evidently pleased. "It is quite absurd to speak so of a school-girl's nonsense-verses."

"I was going to place a condition, however," said Mr. Hunt. "It is quite evident that there is a story behind that poem. If it does not violate the sacred confidences of friendship, perhaps Mrs. Holden would tell us what was the origin of that poem."

"You will be disappointed," said the doctor's wife. "It is nothing. Just a school-girl freak; and nothing more. Oh, dear! to think that all this fuss should be made about such foolish trifling. I'll never forgive you, James; nor you, Father Dillon."

"The story! The story!" echoed the *Sunetoi*.

"Why, there is no story," cried Mrs. Holden in agony. "It was only that one night at a ball in Cork, I'm afraid to say how many years ago, two of us got tired of the music, and the dancing, and went out sometime after one o'clock into the garden. We had our wraps around us against the night air; and we sat, and talked, and were silent. And then Aline suggested that we should wait and watch for the dawn. 'I hate the thought,' she said, 'of going back into that reeking atmosphere again. Let us sit here, until the people go away!' And so we sat, all night, talking of everything. Aline was always turning the conversation on things above the stars. I wanted to talk about our partners, and the music, and the flowers, and the supper-table. She was rambling

away about Heaven, and Death; and then, the dawn-wind rose up, and shook the lime, and one little star of the jasmine that was hanging down over the wall fell into her lap; and — and — you know the rest!”

“She died?” said someone, in a timid voice.

“Yes! She was dying then; but neither she, nor anyone else, knew it. The whole thing was a foretaste of eternity!”

“I presume,” said Mr. Marshall, “from what you say, that your young friend was perfect and adorable?”

“There, we mustn’t speak of that,” said Mrs. Holden. “I’m sorry that the veil should have been lifted so far.”

“Mr. Marshall invariably finds an Iphigenia or a Jephtha’s daughter in those whom the gods take early to themselves,” said Mr. Hunt. “It is a glorious thing to be able to idealise as he does. It was supposed to be the privilege of the young.”

“He could hardly idealise too much in this case,” said Mrs. Holden. “If ever a perfect being existed, it was my friend.”

“And it is a noble thing to preserve such friendship during all these years,” said the Professor. “No wonder that Cicero should say: ‘Except wisdom, I am not sure that the immortal gods have given a greater gift to men.’”

“And Shakspeare — Bacon, I mean!” said Mr. Marshall.

“Quite so. And yet, like all great and beautiful things how fragile it is! I often think we expect too much from each other; then there is disappointment, and then the golden cord is snapped.”

“I should rather think,” said Mr. Hunt, “that most friendships are founded on a sense of equality, and therefore, so easily broken. Because, where there is equality, there is rivalry; where there’s rivalry there is envy; and that is the one great solvent. For real friendship, there must be inequality. That means reverence on the one hand, and protection on the other. These dispositions stand the test of time.”

“But, my dear Mr. Hunt,” said the Professor blandly, “that theory is in direct contradiction to Cicero’s, who in the eighth chapter *de Amicitia* maintains that a sense of benefits

received or conferred is not the real bond of true friendship; but that it has struck its roots deeper down in Nature."

"I regret, Professor, that I cannot agree with your distinguished friend," said Mr. Hunt. "Believe me, the foundation of all friendship, as of everything else that is sacred and holy, is reverence. Now, reverence implies a sense of inequality and dependence. Break that down, equalise friends, bring both to the same stature, and friendship is at an end. I appeal now to Mrs. Holden to say, whether that beautiful and delicate friendship with her friend, which has survived so many years, was not founded on some sense of reverence and inequality."

"You are quite right, Mr. Hunt," said the lady. "I thought Aline the most perfect being I had ever seen. I was only fit to sit at her feet, and look up into her face."

"I did not quite expect that admission," said Mr. Hunt, somewhat embarrassed. "But at least, your humility upholds my theory. And hence, I derive another conclusion, that the most perfect of all pure friendships is that between man and woman."

"Yes!" said Father Dillon, with a little shrug, "but it unfortunately always develops into something else."

"Not always, and not necessarily," said Mr. Hunt, whilst a slight flush now overspread his face, as he felt that all eyes were upon him. "It is the most unhappy feature of our modern society that this should be supposed. I see nothing impossible in the idea of two souls, revolving round each other, a planet with its sun, the one taking heat and light from the greater being, the greater being diffusing its warmth and radiance and controlling power over the lesser, yet each moving in its own orbit, and never attracted by, or approaching the other. To come down to earth, I remember once at an evening party, some young fellows were disposed to revelry; and at the supper table, one, in particular, the greatest amongst them, was making himself painfully remarkable. The others were laughing at his sallies; and even some girls were encour-

aging him with their smiles and approval. He held a glass of champagne in his hand; and was telling some sparkling story, when someone touched his arm slightly. He looked around and seemed frightened. Then, without a word of explanation, he put down his glass and passed out of the room. It was a young girl, who looked pale and composed; but who instantly went on talking as if nothing had happened. There were a hundred conjectures at once of their relationship. Were they betrothed? None guessed the truth. They were absolutely unrelated. There was no possibility whatever of their ever contracting closer ties. They were friends; and friends because so dissimilar and unequal. They had walked together, read together. No more. But he had seen enough to know that she was far above him; and she had seen enough to know that, in some way, he claimed her protection. She gave it, and she became the guardian angel of his life."

"I do not doubt either the fact, or the explanation," said the sceptical Father Dillon, "but, I fear, the idea is too transcendental to become general."

"And you are quite right," said Mr. Hunt, "but why? Not for the impossibility of the thing in itself; but, because, as we heard before, we have vulgarised everything. The tweed cap, the race-course, the comic journals, the drawing-room slang, the ladies' cigarette, and — bridge, have driven all reverence out of social life, and deprived man of his most pleasing illusion, an illusion, however, that is always real,— of the superiority of her who ought to be his angel and his helpmate, but is now becoming his equal, and, therefore, his inferior."

There was a pause. The flush had died away from Mr. Hunt's face, and he was now almost painfully pallid. Then he said suddenly, pointing to Mr. Marshall:

"Look you, ladies and gentlemen, one poem, like Mr. Marshall's 'Egeria,' would almost save our civilisation. But who reads it? And, of those who read it, how many understand it?"

There was one, at least, who understood what he meant.

SESSION SEVENTEENTH

"I HAVE taken the liberty of asking Mr. Marshall to give our society his views on the question that sprang up so suddenly at our last meeting," said Father Dillon. "It was Mr. Hunt's complimentary allusion to Mr. Marshall's poem, 'Egeria,' that suggested to me the idea. Mr. Marshall has kindly consented; and it would be superfluous on my part to bespeak your earnest attention."

"Philosophers," said Mr. Marshall, after making a few prefatory and modest remarks, "sum up the great instincts of our race in two, — preservation and reproduction. They have forgotten a third — the universal instinct of worship. The two former concern man's life. The latter concerns man's soul, and is the clearest proof of its existence. I hate science, not because it is false; but because it is but a half-truth. And, as 'a lie that is half the truth is ever the worst of lies;' so the truth, which is only half-truth, becomes in one sense wholly false. That there are truths, or perhaps I should say facts, beyond the ken of intellect is an admitted doctrine, — never so much admitted as now, when the deeper we penetrate into the abyss of life, the closer and the more recondite does Nature keep its awful secrets. She retreats, as we advance, and gathers up her skirts, lest the very swish of them should reveal her hiding place. There is one, and only one, to whom she reveals herself, and lifts up her veil. And that is her poet. Not that she shows herself in all her terrible and refulgent beauty even to him; but like some Eastern princess, whilst she keeps the *Yashmak* closely drawn on certain features of her face, she shows enough to help him to conjecture, in his own reverential way, the rest. Hence, poetry is the interpretation of worship, as prayer is its voice. In this exalted

sense, you will perceive that nine-tenths of what is called poetry is utterly undeserving of the name. There is no poetry, there can be no poetry, where there is no intuition of Nature's secrets, where there is no worship of such secrets when revealed, and where there is no adequate expression of such worship. Sometimes, there is the jingling and jangling of words as in Southey's 'Lodore' or Edgar Allan Poe's 'Bells.' I don't deny the magic and music of words; but words without meaning are no more to me than the clangour of church-bells on a Sabbath morning. Or again, you have the sweet, easy flow of perfect rhythm, with, however, some meaning, so that it is not altogether sound without sense. If that meaning is the penetration of some divine secret, and the worship of such a secret put into worthy language, it is poetry. If it is only moralising, or didacticism, it is a pretty sermon, and no more. For example, probably the most popular lines in the language are those of Gray's 'Elegy.' Everybody knows them. They are more largely quoted from than any other lines outside of Shakspeare. Pilgrims visit the Churchyard, and recite the verses there. Tennyson is reported to have said that it is the one poem in the English language he would wish to have written. And yet, it is not poetry. Nay, it does not contain even one poetic line. On the other hand, Emerson is denied the title of poet because he had not the rhythmic faculty. That may be true. But, he was a profound Seer; and when he broke into music, he touched the altitudes where the Peers of Nature and Poesy sit at her eternal banquet. Let me give you one example. I could quote many. This may suffice as an illustration of what I mean:

“I thought the sparrow's note from heaven,
Singing at dawn on the alder bough;
I brought him home, in his nest, at even;
He sings the song, but it cheers not now.
For I did not bring home the river and sky; —
He sang to my ear — they sang to my eye.

The delicate shells lay on the shore;
The bubbles of the latest wave
Fresh pearls to their enamel gave;
And the bellowing of the savage sea
Greeted their safe escape to me.
I wiped away the weeds and foam,
I fetched my sea-born treasures home;
But the poor, unsightly, noisome things
Had left their beauty on the shore,
With the sun and the sand and the wild uproar.'

Now that is poetry. Why? Because it is a discovery of one of the most beautiful secrets of Nature, — her oneness, her wholeness, her indivisibility. The smallest item in her vast laboratory takes, and gives its loveliness, because it is connected with her. Break the contact, and the beauty is lost. The chirp of the sparrow was divine, when the little thing was hidden in the bosom of its mother. It lost its magic when the hand of man removed it from its natural setting. The shells were iridescent and resplendent on the shore, wet with the kisses of the wave. They lost their beauty, when they were transformed to the show-case, or the mantelpiece. There is the first element of poetry — the lifting of the veil on the face of Isis, the discovery of one of her secrets. Then, there is the element of worship — worship of Nature's music in the sparrow's song; worship of Nature's handiwork in the splendid enamel of the shell. Finally, there is the secret and the worship revealed in music, — sweet, rhythmical lines, culminating in the grand *bravura*:

“‘With the sun, and the sand, and the wild uproar.’

“Now, coming back to our thesis, you will see that woman is Nature's greatest secret. She is the profoundest of all natural mysteries. Like Nature itself, she is always with us, yet she always eludes us, and evades us. Every analysis of her is a failure. You have often, no doubt, wondered why

our great authors have set themselves the task of explaining in some subtle manner this profoundly cryptic nature. You have also wondered that they never succeed. Even our latest and greatest analyst, George Meredith, has failed. The incomprehensible remains the incomprehensible; and just because it is cryptic, we are called upon, by some hidden instinct of our Nature, to worship afar off. Like the bird and the shell, we dare not detach this sublime portion of Nature, and take it home as a toy to be exhibited. The moment we do so, it loses its music and its lustre. It must be a something detached from ourselves, if it is to command our allegiance. And hence, this Platonic affection of which Mr. Hunt has spoken, remains the highest and holiest demonstration of that instinct that is inseparable from our Nature; that by some kind of reflex action makes us almost Divine; and that draws down upon its votaries the protection, the guidance, and the far-off, unselfish interest of a being, who is human and therefore akin; but who has also the intangible attributes of the spirit-world."

Mr. Marshall paused, wiped his broad brow, looked around holding his paper open in his hands. The *Sunetoi* were silent. The Professor and Miss Fraser were turning the thing over in their minds, and seeking to grasp the sequence of the thought. Mrs. Skelton and the doctor's wife looked puzzled, as if they were not quite sure whether they, as married ladies, came within the radius of worship. Robert Skelton whispered the doctor:

"Was I right? I'll bring the Major now!"

"That would never do," replied the doctor, *sotto voce*.

"The Major won't drink tea."

"I'll get him to gulp down one cup for the fun of the thing."

At last, Father Dillon said, looking at the radiant face of Hester Hope:

"I'm afraid Coventry Patmore would blaspheme if he were here. What would you do with his House-Angel?"

"Ha, my dear Mr. Chairman," said Mr. Marshall, stretch-

ing out his hand, "you are quite mistaken. Mr. Patmore and I are one. The House-Angel is not dissevered from Nature; nay, she comes closer to the great Mother. She is never closer than when she holds her Babe in her arms. Then she forms one of the twin stars of worship. And, you will notice how, as years advance, the perfervid passions of youth tone away into the Platonic and perfect friendship of which we were speaking; whilst the purely maternal love, absolutely passionless and unselfish, is the very ideal of that form of friendship, with its correlatives of reverential love and reciprocal protection, of which we were speaking. But, let me illustrate what I mean. You have been at a Ball, — a County or Race Ball, or Subscription Ball?"

"Never!" said Father Dillon, so emphatically that the *Sunetoi* smiled.

"Ha! I quite forgot!" said Mr. Marshall. "Gentlemen of your profession do not frequent Balls. But, you will understand."

Mr. Marshall paused a moment to form his words. Then, he said:

"The prologue, the overture of a Ball, is verily an act of worship. The temple is the hall. It is decorated. There is a profusion of costly flowers, that show their loveliness in an abashed and modest manner under the fierce searching light of the electric arcs. The air is filled with their perfume. It would be intoxicating; but the pale worshippers, pale with a certain holy dread and reverence, keep a firm grasp on emotion, and will not allow it to break forth in any unseemly or dissipated manner. They are carefully and spotlessly dressed. And lo! their goddesses come. They come, 'in gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,' the daintiest handiwork of Nature. Their votaries bow low before them. They do not touch even their hands, which are covered with soft gloves. On the one hand is beauty, glory, freshness, purity, the song of the bird, the enamelled palace on the shore. On the other hand is worship, as genuine as ever was given to

Diana or Minerva. Twelve o'clock, — the worshippers are satiated. They had touched the Wonderful Things in the dance and the whirl of the ball-room; and lo! the satin is stained from the contact, and the pearls are unloosed and lost; and lo! the idols are at their feet. They seek the supper-room. Two A.M. — The worshippers blaspheme. They have now become comedians. The tragic feature is with the idols, whom they have dragged in the dust. Four A.M. — The comedians are half-asleep, and wholly profane in the thick, black, fetid vapours of the smoke-room. And the goddesses? —

“‘I fetched my sea-born treasures home.
But the poor, unsightly, noisome things
Had left their beauty on the shore,
With the sun, and the sand, and the wild uproar.’”

“That is very sad,” said Father Dillon meditatively. “I thought these meetings were more pleasurable. Is it not strange, then, that young people should be so passionately desirous of these things, where they suffer so much degradation?”

“Ah, my dear sir!” said Mr. Marshall, “there is Nature’s compensation. These young people don’t know their dignity, and therefore suffer no conscious loss!”

“That is still more puzzling,” said the priest. “I can hardly imagine the possessors of such transcendent gifts and endowments to be unconscious of their possession.”

“Does the skylark know its song’s ravishing beauty, or its own mystery, as it hangs beneath a cloud, or poises itself in the ‘golden lightning of the sunken sun?’ Does the lily know that Solomon in all his glory is not arrayed like its own modest splendours? Does the violet understand the nature of the volatile oil it exudes and scatters into perfume? No, my dear sir, Nature, in its mighty freaks of fancy, conceals from all its most glorious and enchanting servitors their royal gifts. They are unconscious of their possession. They

do not therefore regret their loss. And so with the goddesses of whom I have spoken. It is not for them to admire, but to claim admiration. And they get it, above all, from Nature's high priests, her poets. I could recall a thousand instances. Let me mention one. Did ever a daughter of the gods get such an apotheosis as 'Rose Aylmer' in Landor's lines:

“‘Ah, what avails the sceptred race,
Ah, what the form divine!
What every virtue, every grace!
Rose Aylmer, all were thine.
Rose Aylmer, whom those wakeful eyes
May weep, but never see;
A night of memories and of sighs
I consecrate to thee.’”

And, mark you, it was no passing worship — no childish admiration of a toy and then breaking it, and forgetting it. He kept the memory of Rose Aylmer and 'Ianthé' sacred to the end. And, mark you, also, there was no trace of what is called 'love' here. It was a purely Platonic attachment, although he calls it the 'torn romance of his youth.'”

“It is clear, then,” said the young priest, “that all that is wanting to make this earth a Paradise, or rather a temple of worship, is that the ‘weaker sex,’ — what you would call, the ‘nobler’ sex, should realise its dignity and its power.”

“Sir,” said Mr. Marshall, “you have put into a line the supreme philosophy of life.”

SESSION EIGHTEENTH

"I REALLY must ask Mr. Marshall to our Christmas dinner," said Mrs. Holden to her confidential friend. "He dresses abominably; but he speaks charmingly. I wonder has he an evening suit?"

"You may be sure he has, my dear," said Mrs. Skelton. "It may be a little shabby; but it won't be noticed under the electric light. Besides, I shall get Robert to give him a hint."

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Holden, toying with her rings in a musing manner. "He does say pretty things; and who knows? he may be Lord Ormery yet!"

"Stranger things happen, my dear," said Mrs. Skelton, "and I'm sure he would be grateful for any condescension we may show him now."

"It's a little risky, however," said her friend. "You know we have to consult appearances. I wonder what would Mrs. Babbage say? She would be sure to hear it. She hears everything from her servants. If we could only find out who calls, or —"

It was very perplexing. The risks were great. Her natural kindness, and the magic words "Lord Ormery," written in gold along the sky-line of imagination, seemed to justify her plunging into unknown dangers. But on the other hand, there was the terrible risk of losing caste — the possibility of having to meet a freezing question:

"How very kind of you to have asked that poor man, Mr. Marshall, to dinner! Even the Rector's wife did not venture so far. Was Mrs. Babbage quite right, my dear? Because, really, it is an example of Christian charity we all might imitate."

This little interchange of comment and advice took place

in Mrs. Skelton's drawing-room a few minutes previous to the commencement of the eighteenth Session. It was broken up, by the opening address of the young priest, who said:

"Before the Professor reads his paper with the title 'The Gaelic language is akin to the Welsh; and both found a single tongue in France and Germany, and further back in the East, before the migration commenced,' a question has been asked, which I think Mr. Marshall alone is privileged to solve. It is 'Where does the work of the scientist end in the interpretation of Nature; and where does the vocation of the poet begin?'"

"The answer is quite simple and prompt," said Mr. Marshall. "The scientist never interprets Nature. That is the exclusive privilege of her poets."

"But, really, you must admit, Mr. Marshall," said the Professor, "that, on your own principles, the scientist deserves recognition, because he, too, is a revealer of Nature's profoundest secrets."

"You are confounding Nature, the Mother and Goddess of men, with the earth or sea, or sky, which are only constituent elements, — the hem of her garment, the tiara for her hair, the pearls that gleam in her cestus. In these matters, the scientist is a mere haberdasher or purveyor. He is of no higher grade in the vast Temple of her worshippers than a pew-opener in a parish church."

"You are incorrigible," said the Professor, turning to Father Dillon. "May I go on?"

"Just one moment, please," said Mr. Marshall. "I fear I have not made myself quite intelligible. What I mean is this. You may dig and delve, you may break up and analyse, the constituent elements of nature, and yet never reach her slightest secret. Your electricity and hidden ethereal forces, your geological discoveries and sudden revelations of new elements, such as radium, xenon, etc., have no more to do with our knowledge of Nature than the tailor's measurements have to do with a Shakspeare or Goethe. What do I prove,

or what do I reveal, when I say that xenon is a rare constituent of the air we breathe, — one part in every 170,000,000? Am I nearer the mark when I discover that helium is quite common, — one part in every 500,000? Does it increase my reverence for the great Mother, when I am told that every cubic mile of river water carries in solution 762,000 tons of dissolved foreign matter? Or, that aluminium forms eight per cent of the earth's lithosphere? Why, one genuine line of poetry is worth all the scraps of information the ingenuity of scientists could accumulate in a thousand years."

"Well, well," said the Professor impartially, "we'll admit all that. And yet, your Mother Nature treats her pet children badly. Her poets are generally out of elbows."

He had hardly said the words, when Mr. Marshall's scanty wardrobe seemed to reproach him. His face, although hardened by the daily confronting of one hundred brazen students, became scarlet with shame. He looked around in an embarrassed manner. Mr. Hunt was smiling at the angry and pained expression on Miss Hope's face. Miss Fraser seemed indifferent. Father Dillon came swiftly to the rescue.

"It is quite true," he said, "but I fear that Nature is only responsible for their greatness, and therefore, their improvidence through contempt of small things. But it is the world's indifference that is exasperating. Just lately, I have been thinking, and not without a pang of shame, that possibly, within the last few years, I was proffered a box of matches for a penny by Francis Thompson at the gates of Charing Cross; and possibly, turned away from him in scorn. Can you conceive anything more dreadful? If someone told me it was true, I could never forgive myself."

"Ah, well they have got their 'apotheosis' after death," said the Professor. "To such immaterial natures, that glory is sufficient."

"Yes, to them," said Father Dillon. "But what a reproach to us! If we gave them the charity of our silence, it would not matter so much. But, it sets me wild to see people,

that never heard the names of our 'immortals' in life; and, if they had known them, would have scorned them, filling page after page in our magazines with laudatory notices after death. It is a kind of body-snatching, a manner of making a few wretched pounds by rattling the bones of the dead, that seems to be utterly condemnable. I suppose literary people have to get bread and butter, like ordinary folk; but it is hard that these should be kneaded from the ashes of dead gods."

"I share your honest indignation, Mr. Chairman," said Mr. Hunt. "The only apology that can be made for the world's neglect is the fact that these noblemen of nature are difficult to be found, and, when found, are, for the most part, unapproachable. But, we are tiring the Professor. Perhaps, the Celts and Cymri may throw light on the question."

"There cannot be a doubt," said the Professor, opening his manuscript, and reading deliberately, and with a certain emphasis, as if he were displeased at the delay, "that there was at one period in human history, ill-defined, but probably 5000 years before our era, a vast hegira, or migration of the primitive Aryan race, that occupied the high table-lands of Asia as far as the Indus. The most recent researches seem to confirm the traditional belief that this migration broke itself into two streams of humanity — the one, passing southwards into Egypt, and along the northern shores of Africa, crossing the Straits of Gibraltar, occupying Spain, passing thence into Gaul, where again it broke into three branches, one proceeding south to Italy; the other, doubling back towards the East, and occupying the countries now marked as Hungary and Transylvania; the third, and most important, proceeding northward, leaving its traces well marked in Brittany, crossing the Channel, and occupying the western parts of England, especially Cornwall and Cambria, and finally passing over into Ireland, where the migration reached its terminus, and where the characteristics of the original race have been most carefully preserved. The other branch, we need not follow.

Hence, it is quite true that the Irish have a Phenician origin. No doubt, the primitive nomads dwelt in Phenicia. Hence, it is also true, that the direct ancestors of the Irish came from Spain, but not in ships, but overland by way of Gaul and Wales. It is remarkable that this vast locust-swarm of nomads has left not a single trace of their passage across northern Africa. Clearly, they were not allowed to abide peacefully in those Elysian regions as they were then; but were pushed on rapidly by the mere powerful Semitic races. Probably, this too is the reason why there is scarcely a single point of connection between the Celts and the Hellenes. Some writers, and I think Cardinal Newman amongst them, affect to perceive strong racial affinities between the Irish and the Greeks, — the same artistic tastes, the same love of eloquence, the same intellectual brightness, and the same cunning; but this is accidental. The nomads took no blood-admixture, and no intellectual or moral infection from the Hellenes. They were driven forward by the hostility of powerful tribes, until the original impetus expired, or they were stopped by the terrestrial limits of an Ultima Thule. It is quite true that there are many Irish words whose similarity to Greek equivalents throws doubt on their originality. Such are the names of animals, — dog, horse, bull, etc. But, I cannot see otherwise much affinity. I do not think the Aryans ever dwelt in Greece. The greater preponderance of Latin words in the Irish language must have been derived from the Celtic occupation of Spain and Gaul, although I feel sure that the Celtic migration from these countries must have taken place before the Roman invasion. Irish scholars repudiate with some anger the theory that the Latinised words were introduced into Ireland by the Christian missionaries before and after St. Patrick. Of course, the same authorities will maintain that the Aryan was the original root-language, as the race was the primitive race of mankind; and that, therefore, the 'old Irish,' as it is called, is verily and indeed the pure source and fountain undefiled of all the Indo-European tongues, including Greek

and Latin. Some colour is lent to this idea by the strange affinity that exists between the two great racial traditions in each country, — its religion and its folk-lore. There can be no doubt that the Druidical worship of ancient Ireland is identically the same as the Fire-worship of the East. Even to the yellow garments of the priests it is identical. Round-towers, or fire-towers, are common to Ireland and Persia. Bel, or Baal, was the national god. It was pure pantheism; and it affords another proof that the Celtic nomads never touched Greece or Rome, because there is a total absence of the polytheism of these nations. The religion of the East and the extreme West is pure monotheism, or Nature-worship. So, too, in folk-lore. Here again the animals play a conspicuous part, sometimes and mostly as fearful agents of Nature; but in Christian times tamed down as it were by Franciscan love. There is a very wonderful similarity between the Celtic legend of the *Tain-bo*, now regarded as the Celtic Iliad, with its two fierce bulls, locked in each other's horns, and fighting around the coasts of Ireland, until the dismembered carcass of the vanquished strews half the hills and valleys of the Island; and the legend of the wonder-working cow, Nandíní, as told in the *Māhābhārātā*.

“Once on a time Visvämitra, who was son of Gähdi, King of Känyakubja, was out hunting, and he came to the hut, or hermitage of Vasishtha, where he was received with all honour, entertained royally, and presented with all manner of precious jewels and dresses, which the Sage obtained from his wonder-working cow, Nandíní. The soul of Visvämitra was seized with cupidity at the sight of this magic cow, and all the wonders she effected; and he offered Vasishtha a hundred million cows, or his kingdom, to possess her. The hermit replies that even for his kingdom, he cannot part with the cow. The Visvämitra plainly tells him that he will take the animal by force. ‘I am a Kshatriya; thou art a Brähman. Thy functions are austere fervour and sacred study. How can there be any vigour in Brähmans who are calm and self-

restrained? Since thou wilt not give me, in exchange for a hundred million cows, that which I desire, I shall not abandon the privilege of my own class. I will carry away the cow by force.' The hermit tells him to do as he pleases. Visvāmītra accordingly seizes the cow, she is driven hither and thither with stick and stone, but will not move. The holy man asks her what is he to do. Nandīnī complains that he is overlooking the violence to which she is subjected. 'What can I do?' he replies. 'Force is the strength of Kshatriyas, patience that of the Brāhmans. Go, if thou pleasest!' She again complains. But the holy man explains that it is all against his will. She should remain, if he could keep her. Then the cow assumes a fearful aspect, her eyes glow with fire, she tosses her horns in the air, and routs the whole army of Visvāmītra. Being again beaten, she assumes a more terrifying aspect, discharges clouds of firebrands from every portion of her sacred body, which instantly spring into armed men; and vast tribes are thereby created which annihilate the armies of the King. The latter, conquered and beaten, submits, and crying out: 'Shame on a Kshatriya's force; it is the force of a Brāhman's weakness, that is force indeed,' he resigns his kingdom, and assumes an austere life."

"There appears here," continued the Professor, "some foreshadowing of the conflict between Paganism and Christianity in ancient Ireland. It is the controversy between Ossian and Patrick in another form. But I am straying from my subject. The original identity of the Irish Celts and the Welsh Cymri was established as far back as the commencement of the eighteenth century by Edward Lhuyd, who spent five years making investigations in Wales, Cornwall, Armorica, Scotland; and he comes to the strange conclusion that, though originally springing from the same Aryan stock, the Gaels and the Cymri separated before they left the Continent of Europe. The former were the first to cross the Channel, whence at a later date they were expelled by the Cymri, who, in turn, were driven by the Roman cohorts into the fastnesses

of Wales and Cornwall. It would be impossible to go deeply into the subject of language here, and to trace affinities by comparisons. It is enough to say that, in Ireland, we have names of places that do not belong to the Irish tongue but to the Welsh; and in Wales, we have correspondingly Irish names that are unknown in Welsh. Thus showing that the migratory race took with it certain remnants of an ancient tongue that was common to both races; and that the Welsh were unable to stamp out the lingual traces of the *Keltoi* who once inhabited their land. But all this is shrouded in difficulty, a difficulty which the researches of learned men are making more difficult. They are discovering too many analogies. One cannot see the wood on account of the trees. I think there are already at least fifty interpretations of the word Eiré, or Ireland. The inhabitants will not accept the most honourable *Arya-Land*, that which proves beyond all doubt the vast antiquity and purity of the race. But, it is in the literatures of the two countries we see the strongest resemblances, whilst each has its own peculiarities. In both, the human imagination takes its wildest flight. It soars out beyond the narrow limits in which the Greek fancy was confined. It strains after the Infinite. The ancient Euhemerism, that deified heroes, such as Herakles, is here developed in countless ways; the powers of Nature are invested with magical energies and possibilities; Time is annihilated, because calculated not by years, but æons; men assume the shape of animals, and animals are endowed with the speech and intelligence of men. It is all a dream of Hy-Brasil, or Islands of the Blest; a broken reminiscence of Paradise before the Fall. This dreamy spirit, this seeking after illusions, this thirst for the supernatural, and impatience of mere facts and realities, is certainly a characteristic of the Irish of today. And one writer, who goes more deeply into the hidden reasons and meanings of things, particularly in this question of ethnology, finds in this hankering after illusion, and suicide of reason, the most potent element in that sad tendency of Celtic

nations — to steep the senses in narcotics. One other characteristic of Celtic and Cymric legends is their singular refinement. They are sad. The Arthurian Idylls are steeped in sadness. But it is a gentle, not a ruthless melancholy. There is no bloodshed, no fierce, sanguinary rites; none of that terrific noise and fury in which the legends of the Nibelungen-lied are enwrapped. Whatever may have been the religious rites of the people, and we must suppose they were Druidical and sanguinary, the folk-lore or legendary literature is quite the contrary. Everything is beautiful, magical, elusive, and illusory — the creation of an imaginative people, who had seen better things, and still aspired after them. Hence, you never meet in the Celtic legends any type of womanhood which is not exquisitely delicate and refined. Compare, as E. Renan has compared them, the Kudrun and Krimhilde of the Teutonic legends with the ladies of the Arthurian cycle; and you will see the difference between Valkyries and the queens of chivalry. This was still more remarkable amongst the Irish, whose ancient legends speak of the gentlest and most spiritual types of womanhood, — types that are yet found in the fairy legends, where Shakspeare's Mab and her following were found; or in the Banshee, the woman who wails over the dead. Nay, even in her ballad-poetry, the same idealisation is evident. Not only is their country represented under the form of a beautiful girl, as *Kathleen-ni-Houlahan*, or *Dark Rosaleen*; but even in the seventeenth century ballad-poetry in Erse, and even in the songs that are sung at fair and market today amongst the lowest dregs of the populace, woman is always idealised. She is always perfection. Hence, I conclude, that as there are unquestionably feminine souls in masculine bodies, and Lady Macbeths in female forms, so too with nations. And I think the Irish nation essentially feminine. Whether this can be taken as a compliment or otherwise, I see in Irish tenderness, Irish delicacy, in the poetic and idealistic temperament, and also, in Irish vacillation, and want of balance, symptoms of what

may be called the feminine temperament. And, probably, this too may account for her strongly pronounced religious idealism. There can be no doubt of her marked individuality, her distinction and separation from the grosser races of the earth. She is not inaptly represented as a woman, seated beneath the Round Tower, the emblem of her origin, with her harp at her feet, emblem of her spirituality, and her wolf-dog, emblem of her hostility towards savage and unbridled lust of empire and power. She is watching the sun, half of whose orb is above the horizon. Whether this is emblematic of her decay, or her resurrection, time alone can tell."

The conclusion of the paper was received with much applause, Mr. Marshall's face beaming with delight at the confirmation of his pet theories in this short history of his race.

SESSION NINETEENTH

FATHER DILLON, as we have seen, was a young man of keen perceptions and intuitions; and he saw that, however academic and harmless the paper read by the Professor might appear, there were streaks of lightning through it; and it was his obvious duty to subdue and extinguish or divert them, if he were to maintain his fundamental purpose of securing peace in his society. Casting around for a lightning conductor he struck on Mr. Marshall; and hence, at the opening of the nineteenth Session of the *Sunetoi*, that gentleman took out a little frayed note-book, and said, with that air of gentle urbanity which characterised him:

"I had not expected to make my *début* before this distinguished society so soon; but I could not refuse the President's request; and, as I think it would be hardly respectful to read for you any of my printed verses, I brought here a few little light things, a kind of *petits soufflés* which may serve as an *entrée* to our banquet of tonight. I thought first of reading to you a longer poem, which I have called 'The Temple of Sleep;' but," he added, looking around with a little deprecatory smile, "it is a little obscure, and so to speak, mystical. I have a tendency to mysticism, — a fatal tendency, indeed, which I have vainly tried to curb. So I shall read, with your permission, a few little trifles, less obscure, and which I have designated 'Fantasies.' You will notice a little resemblance in the triple rhythm to poor Paul Verlaine; but not otherwise. The first I have called:

NATURA VICTRIX

He spilt sea-pearls upon the sand;
He grasped me in his hollow hand;
He said; I am thy slave, Command!

The genii of the sea and sky
With every whim of mine comply.
They are my slaves. But thine am I.

I can uncurve the hollow wave,
And smooth to silk where tempests drave;
Command me, for I am thy slave.

But I reluctant said: Nay! Nay!
Let Nature hold her ancient sway,
And rule her regal waterway.

For who am I to tempt her so,
Despite her, make her tempests blow,
Or stem her currents' underflow?

She knows her bounds; she knows her laws;
Nor shall I challenge her because
Her fury from her love she draws.

She rules with right her water-sphere;
She kindles love; she kindles fear;
Ægle or Nais everywhere.

He flung the salt sea on the sands;
He smote me with his hollow hands;
"Thou slave!" he cried, "go hug thy bands!"

"The Second Fantasie," said Mr. Marshall, "I have called

THE GLAIVE

I drew my sword from out its sheath,
I flung the scabbard there beneath,
It glittered on the purple heath.

And all the elf-lights sparkling shone
The two-faced, two-edged blade upon,
Flashed for a moment and were gone.

And sudden roared a maddened flood,
I hacked and hewed it as I stood,
Till blade and gauntlet both were blood.

And then it vanished quite, until
The flood was but a rippling rill
Yearning its sweetness to distil.

I dipped the blade with just a prayer,
I ran it through my streaming hair,
But no! the ill-starred stain was there.

I hung it in our Lady's shrine,
I begged by Heaven, and Babe divine,
The brand be cleansed, and yet be mine.

Ah no! to my half-maddened mind
It seemed the more incarnadined,
More black for all it left behind.

I called a little child, and lo!
I bade him breathe, breathe soft and blow.
The crimson was a silvered snow.

I put the brand within its sheath,
I hung it where the breezes breathe—
It points to one small grave beneath.

"The Third Fantasie," said Mr. Marshall, — "am I tiring the company?"

"No, no, no!" cried the *Sunetoi*.

"The Third Fantasie is called:

THE SOULLESS

I saw the sun shine at the Pole;
I saw the rivers backward roll;
I saw a man without a soul.

And of the three, which was the worst?
I shuddered when I saw the first.
Feared I the next. The Third I cursed.

The sun was green; the ice-floes green;
And ghastly in the twilight sheen,
A white bear capped the dismal scene.

It mouthed its cub with hot, red lips;
The cub was dead. And downward dips
The green sun in a black eclipse.

And broken, struggling, maddened, swirled,
In vortices of ruin hurled
The ice-packs swept a ruined world.

In the retreat of waters choked
A myriad dying monsters croaked;
The earth with putrid corpses soaked.

And yet, I did not curse but when
I saw amid the ranks of men
What was beyond all human ken.

A monster possible, — but yet
Amidst a myriad fears unmet,
A fiend in an idol set.

A white clay image rudely framed,
Amongst God's creatures yet unnamed,
A thing by league or law untamed.

And can it be? and shall it be?
Will God forbend the mystery,
Lest Earth should burst in agony?

The polar star still rides on high,
The river courses now are dry;
The earth has shuddered; the man is nigh.

"The Fourth Fantasia is a pretty little experience," said Mr. Marshall. "Of course, you will see it is also allegorical. I have named it

THE NESTLING

In the apple-blossoms I hid my face,
I never dreamed I could find a trace
Of aught but tender and gentle grace

Of bud and leaf; and the subtle scent
Of clove and musk; and a music sent
From the stops of some wind-blown instrument.

But swift sped by a honey-bee,
Brown and hairy and gold was he, —
A well-filled aerial argosy.

And as he passed, I was swift aware
Of a keen, half-angry, sudden stare,
Half-righteous wrath, and but half a scare.

It gleamed from the green nest interweaved
In the shade of the branches verdant-leaved,
And it said, as verily I believed:

"Seek as thou wilt. These are mine,
Nought but my love did intertwine
This nest from the boughs of the jessamine.

"And I am God's! This garden fair
You say is yours — Yet nowhere here
Does your mind or your handiwork appear.

"Go, therefore, go! nor dare to pry
With a silly or sacrilegious eye
Behind the veil of my sanctuary."

And I obeyed. And to this day
What were the eyes that gleamed so gray,
Serpent's or bird's I cannot say.

"Only one more," said Mr. Marshall, eager to go on, yet fearing that he was trespassing. "It is a little longer; but not quite so mystical. I have named it

THE VOYAGE

We glide from out the mists of Time,
Far, far away the fog-bells chime
Seems through the sounds of seas to climb.

And farther, farther, farther going,
Into the sunset faintly glowing,
From Ocean into Ocean flowing,

Over the seas as smooth as glass,
Mirrors unflecked, we swiftly pass,
The treasures of the deep amass,

Not in its ooze of pearls and gold,
The great, gray seas in their depths enfold,
Sought in the eld by mariners bold.

But in glorious day-dreams that ever come,
When sky, and sea, and lips are dumb,
And the albatross comes wheeling home,

And never a sailor turns to mind
The long, low line of shore behind,
Where dwelt the land-locked humankind.

Now, in the teeth of a wintry gale,
Blind with lightning, and cut with hail,
For ever and ever we onward sail.

Or, under the shadowy, tropic line,
Shadowless, burnt, we dream and pine,
Over purple seas, under skies benign.

On the dreamy, level, passionless seas,
Uncleft by storm, unkissed by breeze,
Unmoved by the night-wind's litanies.

And the great red stars hang trembling down,
Red as a martyr's ruby crown,
Or seas that the purple sunsets drown.

But farther, farther, farther going
From Ocean unto Ocean flowing,
Space and our souls together growing

Vaster and vaster as on we go
From shadowless line to the Arctic floe,
From the blinding sun to the blinding snow

We break through the far horizon line,
With a force half-human, half-divine,
And we strain for a far, prophetic sign,

That our journey ends on a phantom shore
Where lips no wave, and no tempests roar,
But there is a silence forevermore.

For, out of the mists of time we glide,
And an ocean gleams on every side,
And it is the tranquil eventide.

Yet a sign comes never. We onward fly
Till our soul and God, and our sea and sky,
Blend in the night of eternity.

But when?
No mortal may ever tell!
Hark!

There is the sound of the lighthouse bell!
Ere the dusk had vanished, the midnight fell.

"That is all at present, ladies and gentlemen," said Mr. Marshall. "I fear I have been prolix; and the lines, containing an allegory, are perhaps obscure. But, you know, it would never do for a poet in our age to be too intelligible. The age is self-introspective, self-involved; and we must keep

the organ-voices of our poets tuned to the pitch of sentiment that prevails."

"Quite so," said Father Dillon. "And now, I shall be happy to hear any remarks that may suggest themselves to the members."

There was an ominous silence; and Father Dillon would have been wise to close the matter there. But he thought it would be uncomplimentary to the Professor, so he said:

"Mr. Hunt?"

That young gentleman raised himself a little from his lounging and languid attitude, and said slowly, picking his words:

"It is impertinent, as well as unwise, for a mere Saxon to intrude his opinions; but, just to set the ball going, may I say that I cannot well perceive how the Gaels or Celts could have incorporated into their language certain Latin words, if the tide of migration had swept over Spain and Gaul prior to the Roman invasion of these countries? Are we to suppose that the Latin tongue was spoken over the Western world before the Roman eagles had conquered it?"

"And why not?" answered the Professor. "The English language is spoken today by peoples who have never come under English domination; and I am of opinion that so slow was the progress of the great migratory Aryan tribes that they can hardly have planted themselves in Britain and Ireland before the tide of Roman conquest swept the former island."

"Quite so," said Mr. Hunt. "And to corroborate that view, I have read somewhere, I think it is in the '*Agricola*' of Tacitus, that a certain Irish chieftain did come over from his country and invite the Roman conqueror to invade it, promising that one legion would be quite sufficient to reduce the whole island. This argues either a sparse, a very sparse and unsettled population, or a lack of that fighting power which we are accustomed to associate with the race."

There was a slight touch of Saxon sarcasm in the words. It was quite intangible, and could not be quarrelled with;

but Hester Hope bit her lip in vexation. Alas! there was a hint at perfidy, which history rather confirmed.

"Strange to say," said Miss Fraser, "our Carlyle always maintained that the Scotch were never Celts, but Norsemen. He could not see a single Celtic characteristic in our countrymen."

"How then explain the language of the Highlands?" asked the Professor.

"It was imported, he thought, by the Irish monks and missionaries."

"But how did the Norsemen get there?" said Father Dillon.

"Again, by migration. They had only to cross the North Sea from Scandinavia."

"That leads me to ask the Professor another question," said Mr. Hunt. "The paper speaks of the original migrations splitting themselves into two streams of humanity. We have followed the one with much interest. Of course, the fate of the other does not come within the scope of the Professor's paper. But I am curious about it."

"Well," said the Professor, "I have only followed the Aryan Celt; but I believe the theory is, that the other branch of the original stock passed northwards to the west of the Caspian Sea, across the Russian steppes, where again it broke up, one branch spreading south and west, and forming the later Gothic and Teutonic races; the other, moving northwards and occupying Denmark and Scandinavia. These were the terrible Norsemen of the tenth and eleventh centuries, who broke loose from their northern fastnesses, and ravaged as pirates all the coasts of Northern Europe."

"But if these Norsemen," said Mr. Hunt, "and the Alemanni of Central Europe, were so terrible, not only in their predatory and warlike instincts, but even in their songs and folk-lore, how could they have sprung from the milder Aryan tribes, whose descendants in Armorica and Ireland have been characterised as a 'feminine' race? The expression," Mr. Hunt hastily added, "is not mine."

"I really must interfere to say," cried Hester Hope, "that I totally object to our people being called 'feminine,' or a 'feminine race.' Who has the responsibility of such a term?"

"A Breton and a Gascon, and therefore twice an Aryan," said the Professor. "You have heard of Ernest Renan?"

"Rather," she said, with some contempt in her voice. "A word-builder and phrase-maker, who would sacrifice the truth at any moment for the sake of a *bon mot*."

"He meant it as a compliment," said the Professor.

"He should have spoken truth," said Miss Hope. "Surely the race that swept all Europe clean right to the foot of the Alps, where, as was befitting, their King met a godlike death; and the race which the Romans never conquered, and the race which has taken a large share in all the battles of the world; and the race which has given Generals to half the countries of Europe, cannot be called a feminine race."

The argument appeared conclusive, especially as it was urged by the earnest voice and the flashing eyes of the speaker. The answer came from an unexpected quarter.

The doctor, who was a silent man, took little part, although much interest, in those esoteric debates. He surprised the members not a little, therefore, when he broke in upon the debate, and with some heat.

"You are mistaken, Hester," he said. Hester and the doctor were great friends. "We are not only a feminine race; but we are anciently feminine, that is, we are a pack of old women. If you dislike that expression, let me say, we are a nation of children. We are yet in our childhood, holding on to the apron-strings of anyone who will guide us. We have not reached even our adolescence. I saw a specimen of what we are this very day. Some fellows here sent me up to the City as their Delegate to what was called a Convention. I knew what a Convention was. I had experience before. Three or four hundred men are gathered into a hall and seated. They have to listen in silence for three or

four hours to dreary speeches from Members of Parliament and otherwise, — speeches such as Hamlet describes as ‘words, words, words.’ They are told, with every degree of emphasis, that the one thing required in Ireland is ‘Unity,’ and that ‘Dissension’ is the evil genius of the race. Then, resolutions are proposed by the gentlemen on the platform, seconded by other gentlemen on the platform, and passed unanimously. And the Convention is at an end. I knew the whole thing would be eminently farcical. But I went. There were about four hundred delegates in the Assembly-Rooms, mostly of the farming class, well-dressed, clean-cut, intelligent fellows, most of them young men, or men of middle age. There was not a gray head amongst them. I noticed here and there some young fellows wearing rosettes, and moving around, gathering little groups, with whom they whispered. These were to be the *claqueurs* of the convention. Presently, the great ones, the elect, came upon the platform — a few Members of Parliament, several priests, etc., and the proceedings commenced in the usual way. The first resolution, of course, was, ‘That we renew our expression of unlimited confidence in our members of Parliament; and reiterate our resolution to maintain the unity and integrity of the Party at any cost.’ This was proposed by a lay-delegate, and seconded by a priest. So far all was harmonious. But, when the Chairman, who was also a Member, asked if any delegate had an amendment to propose, a young farmer, sitting close by me, rose and said:

“‘I object to the resolution, because, as a matter of fact, we don’t even know who our Members are —’

“‘But here arose such shouts of ‘Turn him out,’ ‘Chuck him out!’ such derisive laughter, such stamping of feet, that there was no going further. The young chap held his ground, however; and, when there was a little breath of silence, he said:

“‘I have been fifteen years in my district, and I have never seen the face of our Member; nor do I know his name. If —’

"Here again pandemonium broke loose, and some of the *claqueurs* moved towards the lad to eject him. I thought it time to interpose, and I challenged the Chairman to give the young man a fair chance of being heard.

"Your name, please?' said the Chairman.

"Dr. James Holden, Delegate for Cove,' I replied.

"Well, what's in a name? At any rate, I was invited to the platform; but I declined to go. I renewed my request that the young man be heard.

"Well, then,' said the Chairman, somewhat ruffled, 'let him put himself in order by proposing an amendment.'

"Thus challenged, and quite *impromptu*, after looking at his notes, the young man said:

"I beg to propose that our Members, being our representatives, and not our masters, be required to give an annual report to their constituencies of the progress made by the Irish cause in Parliament every year; that this report shall be made during the Parliamentary recess; that it shall be made to a County Convention, which shall be formed by the elective votes of the already elected constituencies, namely, the County Councils, the Rural and District and Urban Councils, and the Boards of Guardians exclusively; that these County Conventions shall alone have the privilege of electing delegates to a National Convention which shall be composed of these County Delegates, selected according to the size and population of each County, and which shall sit in Dublin during one whole week to consult with their Members as to the present prospects and future hopes of the nation; and that each County shall not only support its own Members of Parliament, but shall also pay the expenses of its delegates to the National Convention.'

"The fellow took them so much by surprise that they forgot to shout him down. But, as he folded his paper, there was a yell of inextinguishable laughter, and some fellow said:

"And I propose a second amendment, that this fellow be made sole Lord and Supreme Governor of Ireland.'

"The lad remained standing, however, and prepared to speak to his amendment; but there was no longer a chance of being heard. 'Sit down, you fool,' 'Turn him out,' 'Chuck him out,' 'Who the d——l is this idiot?' echoed on all sides. At length, the Chairman arose, and said:

"'Is it the desire of the Convention that this Delegate be further heard?'

"There was a furious yell of *Noes*; and the young man resumed his seat. Not content with this victory, however, some of the young men approached closer, evidently with the intention of violently ejecting the young lad from the Hall. He, however, rose up; and, placing his hand significantly on his hip-pocket, he said:

"'You won't listen to me! Very good. I'm not going to trouble you further. But, the man that touches me does so at his peril.' They drew back. He rose instantly, passed into the aisle, bowed to the Chair, and amidst a storm of hisses and whistlings and catcallings, he passed unmoved from the Hall. I couldn't stand it. So I rose up, took my hat, and said:

"'Mr. Chairman, if this deliberative and calmly consultative assemblage is to be taken as an example of what we are to expect in the near future, than may God grant that we shall never see Home Rule in Ireland, because it would mean the total destruction of the two greatest privileges man possesses — freedom of thought and liberty of speech.'"

"They didn't assassinate you?" said Bob Skelton.

"No! They didn't even hiss me. I just heard the Chairman say, as I passed out the front door: 'Now that these malcontents and factionists are removed, the work of the Convention will proceed in harmony.' But, you see, what an infantine condition we are in. Pay and obey! That's all!"

"Well, it sounds badly," said Father Dillon. "But there's another view of the question. When a nation is struggling onwards to freedom, the one thing absolutely necessary is

discipline — the sinking of individual opinions, and accepting the verdict of the majority. We are at war, trying to recover our lost inheritance; and in war, the one thing always fatal is indiscipline — the breaking away of detachments from the main army. I think that young man should have been heard, and then, the Convention could reject his absurd proposition.”

“Absurd,” cried the doctor. “Where’s the absurdity? The amendment was simply to the effect that these Conventions should be formed and held in a constitutional manner, not haphazard as now, with not a single elected representative, but a *melée* of priests, and ministers, land and labour delegates, United League representatives, Hibernians, and ultra-Hibernians — all huddled together like sheep in a pen. If the Irish are ever to learn to govern themselves, why not commence now, and take their representatives from those elected by popular suffrage?”

“Well, you see the whole thing is this, doctor,” said Father Dillon, who was very anxious to bring such a discussion to a close. “The country feels that good work has been done by giving our representatives a free hand; and the country is not going to handcuff them now.”

“Of course not. But does the country see that the hands that are loosing its manacles are riveting its fetters? There is little use in shaking ourselves free of England, if we are to be still slaves — without an atom of mental or moral freedom at home.”

“Look here, Mrs. Holden,” said Father Dillon, “would you play the ‘Wearing of the Green’ or something to soothe your husband’s nerves? He’s in a bad state.”

And Mrs. Holden played the “March of the Priests” from “Norma.”

SESSION TWENTIETH

THIS is a misnomer in one sense, inasmuch as it describes Mrs. Holden's Christmas Dinner-Party; and in another sense it is not, because that party did resolve itself into an academic gathering, showing the vast intellectual progress our *Sunetoi* were making, when the force of ideas could break in even with such marvellous cookery as Mrs. Holden presented to her guests.

Ah, yes! That good lady did surpass herself that night, when punctually as the great hall clock chimed seven, she led her guests downstairs, and ushered them into the dining-room. It was a pretty scene. The electric lights, softly shaded by hoods of pink silk, made the glass and silver glitter, but not too loudly; red and white camellias showed their shy petals from dainty silver flower vases; and hidden under a soft mass of maidenhair fern, the lilies of the valley poured out, as unnoticed as a poet scatters his verses, their singular yet powerful perfume. All the *Sunetoi* were present but Miss Fraser, who had to dine with the Scotch family where she was governess; and Father Dillon, who was to dine with the Bishop. With perfect kindness and good taste Mrs. Holden placed Mr. Marshall on her right hand; and Hester Hope next to him. He looked well. His fine massive features, crowned by an aureole of perfectly white hair, gave him the aspect more of a nobleman, than a poet. He was well dressed, for the faint fadings of his dress coat were unobservable. He had a gorgeous shirt front, where one diamond sparkled. But he hadn't had the services of a manicurist. His nails were bitten and irregular, and had not suffered from the brush. That was all the indication left that he was a poet.

The doctor, sitting at the end of the table with Mrs.

Skelton on his right, seemed preoccupied; and something like the shadow of a frown bent his dark eyebrows downwards. The fact was that he meditated battle, for the Convention was rankling in his mind; and he thought the young priest had effected too successful a retreat at the last meeting. All the guests looked happy. There hovered over them that look of tranquil expectation that always comes from closed shutters and excellent viands. There was one drawback. Instead of her own dainty maids, Mrs. Holden had engaged a gorgeous waiter from the neighbouring hotel. Now, some sensitive natures cannot stand waiters. They appear to be highly, too highly, endowed with what M. Renan calls the *critical faculty*; and that, whilst apparently absorbed in the duty of attending to the wants of the guests, they are studiously observant of all the nameless little *gaucheries*, which people will commit when they relax a little under benign influences. And, if one of those critics has ever so much as handed a plate to a Bishop or a Mayor, it gives him a right to assume a condescending air towards inferior people. However, there was one person present who seemed not to be subject to such hypnotic influences. Bob Skelton ordered that waiter around as if he were a nigger.

"Hasn't Mr. Skelton great courage," said Hester Hope to Mr. Marshall in a suppressed whisper, "to order such a grand personage around like that?"

At which Mr. Marshall smiled and said: "I had a friend once who told me, that he was challenged by one of the fraternity, whom he had known under happier circumstances. It was on Patrick's Street, Cork; and the challenge was for a shilling to meet pressing needs. He told me he was as much surprised as if Father Mathew had stepped down from his pedestal and invited him to have a drink."

Which little remark showed that Mr. Marshall possessed that rare gift amongst the "*genus irritabile*"—the saving gift of humour.

Bob Skelton was in his element. Although a popular and

successful manager, he always seemed more at his ease lolling over the side of a yacht, and dropping cigar ashes amongst the fishes, or as now, driving his long carving knife into the plump breast of a turkey.

"To be perfectly candid, Mrs. Holden," he said, handing a plate to the waiter, "this is the first meeting of the — 'what you call 'em's' that I have enjoyed. I don't care a rap for poetry, beyond a good rattling song; nor for papers, except bank notes; nor for politics, where every fellow is as big a scoundrel as every other fellow, and worse. But this is practical work (I'm sending you the liver-wing, Miss Hope. A little celery-sauce?) and honest amusement besides. (Some of the stuffing? All right.) Because, you know (Bring the champagne here, you sir!), my brain gets addled enough with discount and interest (There, can't you go easy, you have spoiled the table-cloth); and I can't follow (Ha — that's good! Gieseler? no! Moët!) all that hard tinkering at words. (A small leg, Mr. Marshall? All right!)"

"Never mind, Bob, you'll come all right yet," said the doctor. "Some day you'll get into Parliament, when the people have some liberty to elect whom they like; and then you'll become Chancellor of the Exchequer."

"No! I have no ambition that way," said Robert. "I suppose I'll get a pension some time or other — enough for myself and the old woman there. Let the kids look out for themselves. And then, a pipe and a glass, and a day now and again reeling out beyond Roche's Point, and I'm content. By the way, James, I thought you expected Willie for Christmas!"

"So we did!" said the doctor, a shade of disappointment gathering on his brow. "Mother had a post-card this morning that he missed the train at Salisbury. His ship is in the *Solent* you know!"

"He may come yet?"

"No! he cannot be here before tomorrow now. The girls couldn't come. And, though one would like to see young faces at Christmas-time, I confess I wouldn't care to see

them crossing the Channel on such a night as we had on Thursday."

"How is that little vixen, Sophy? She never sent me a Christmas card this morning; and we had sworn eternal friendship."

"She is looking forward to being a nun," said the doctor, with a frown. "I suppose she is giving up all Platonic friendships."

"The devil!" said Mr. Skelton, "Sophy a nun! Why that madcap would turn any convent inside out in a week!"

"Ay, that's the way! They're taking all our best boys and girls from us," said the doctor sadly. He was in a despondent mood this night. "The moment a girl develops a bit of talent, she's at once seized upon and made a nun."

"I wonder how Miss Hope escaped?" said the Professor, looking over to where the young lady was trying to eat some dinner, and listen, at the same time, to the poetic platitudes of her neighbour.

"Perhaps she has not escaped as yet?" said Mrs. Skelton, with a laugh.

And strange to say, Mr. Reginald Hunt, who had scarcely taken his eyes off his plate since the commencement of dinner, now looked up, and seemed interested.

"No community would have me," said Hester Hope, thus challenged. "Something more important than talent is required by our Religious Orders!"

"And what may that be?" said the Professor. "I confess I can't see what is, or can be, more important to a nunnery than a young lady of talent."

"There is such a thing as sanctity," said Hester Hope. "And such a thing as obedience. Now, I am a little fond of my own way, and that would never do in religion. And I am fond of reading; and that taste would be circumscribed in religion. If I were caught with 'Romeo and Juliet' under my pillow, I would be soon packed home."

"Dear me!" said the Professor, with a look of astonish-

ment, "how very narrow-minded! Now, I would suppose that 'Romeo and Juliet' would be exactly the book that would catch a young lady's fancy."

There was a slightly irreverent titter at this *naïve* expression on the part of the Professor; and Mr. Marshall, leaning over to Hester Hope, said:

"What a gulf there is between us! We can never understand!"

And Miss Hope touched by the humility of the old man said:

"True. But the poets leap farthest towards us. They just fall short. Did you ever notice how all your poets seem to yearn after the old times? They never speak of 'Sunday service,' or 'revival meetings,' but they are constantly reverting to the 'fretted choir,' 'the chanting of the monks,' 'the Mass-Bell,' 'the Vesper-Hymns,' the peace and contentment of the cloister. From Shakspeare, with his 'sacring-bell,' down to Walter Scott, with all his mediævalism, it is the same. There is some glamour about the old religion, which the poets cannot resist. Your Protestantism is rather a prosaic thing, is it not?"

"Verily, so it is!" said Mr. Marshall. "How could any man write poetry about four bare walls, and the tables of the Ten Commandments?"

Meanwhile, the same question was agitating the mind of Mr. Reginald Hunt. He took up the problem just where the Professor stopped, and said to the doctor:

"In that matter of a choice of life, is there no question of parental authority? Does not your Church recognise the right of parents to determine their children's future?"

"Of course," said the doctor, in a weary manner, as he put aside some dainties in the after-courses of the dinner. "But, although the Church says, consult your parents, it is only a French compliment. We cannot interfere."

"But why?" persisted the young man, who seemed to be much interested in the matter. "Cannot you say, I forbid? You must not enter a nunnery. Will you not be obeyed?"

"Of course I will. But then?" said the doctor, who was quite impatient of such a subject.

"Well then! All is right, is it not? The young lady is emancipated. She has regained her freedom, and has the choice of a happy existence."

"Good Heavens, man!" said the doctor, in a burst of impatience, "No! Quite the contrary. It would take me a thousand years to explain. You could never understand."

The young man seemed disappointed, and remained silent. And the conversation began to flag, as it always does, when people begin to toy with grapes and peaches. There were anxious looks towards Mrs. Holden, and that gracious lady arose. As they passed out, Mr. Marshall, protesting that he never smoked, asked permission to accompany the ladies to the drawing-room.

Somewhere about nine o'clock, Father Dillon, who seemed pleased to be able to rejoin his beloved *Sunetoi*, burst into the smoking-room. He was in splendid spirits; and his presence seemed to spread a radiance around the room. After a few words of greeting, he addressed the doctor:

"How did you put down the day, Doc?"

"Reading," said the doctor, in his gruffest manner, "reading about another public despot and tyrant and autocrat, and private profligate and murderer, whom this d—d world of ours has made an idol of and worships. I was reading Lord Rosebery's Life of Napoleon Buonaparte, the most ineffable scoundrel that the Almighty ever created."

"Oh, now, now, you are always extreme," said the priest. "Napoleon wasn't exactly a saint, but —"

"A saint! Good Heavens, man," said the doctor, in a savage mood, "is there any principle left in the world at all? You preach Christianity; and you worship brute force and lust! Was not that Corsican brigand a murderer, sacrificing two million of Frenchmen, not in the cause of freedom, or any other sacred cause, but to gratify his lust of revenge and ambition? Was he not a cheat, a liar, a horrible profligate? Did he not

murder d'Enghien in Vincennes, and Hofer in the Tyrol; and God only knows, how many other victims in private? Did he not command the massacre of four thousand prisoners over there in Syria against all the rights of war and all the privileges of humanity? Did he not command his general to violate the sanctity of the Vatican, and drag out into the snows the poor old Pope? Did he not rob and plunder every church and art-gallery in Italy, to embellish Paris? Was he not cursed, not only by the peoples whom he ravished and enslaved, but by every mother and sister in France? Was there not a chorus of jubilation in every hamlet from Rochelle to the Rhine, when England at last caged the anarch and the despot, and locked him into her island-prison? And now, a hundred years after he had cursed the world by his presence, here are writers actually disinterring his execrated ashes, and trying to build them into a god."

A dead silence fell upon the gentlemen present at this passionate outburst. Father Dillon eyed the doctor keenly. He had a momentary uncharitable feeling that the doctor had been Christmassing too freely. But that idea was instantly dissipated.

"Look here, Father Dillon," said the doctor, a little more calmly. "I blame gentlemen of your cloth for all this. The people are for the most part born fools. Anyone can lead them. They grasp at every straw, and follow wherever the winds blow. It is your duty as Christian ministers to steady public opinion, and show the people how to think aright on these and kindred subjects."

"You want me then to commence a series of lectures on Napoleon Buonaparte?" said Father Dillon, who was getting annoyed, now that he saw that the doctor was by no means alcoholised. "What is Napoleon to us, or we to Napoleon?"

"You had an exactly similar case here in your own country a few years ago," said the doctor. "History always repeats itself. You had a man, who was no more an Irishman than Napoleon was a Frenchman; you knew him to be unprincipled.

Like the veterans of Napoleon, the people here won the battles of the country, and he snatched the laurels. You gathered forty thousand pounds, and flung them at his feet. You almost turned back upon your religion by flouting the solemn warnings of the Pope to please him. Then, in the supreme moment of victory, when the prize of battle for which you had been contending for six hundred years was in your hands, he betrayed you and your country for a woman's smiles, and flung you back for another century of slavery. And now, you are raising his statue under the shadow of Father Mathew; and —"

"You cannot throw mud at the clergy there, doctor," said Father Dillon. "He got little sympathy from us. Personally, I think he did enormous good for Ireland. He led us out of the Land of Egypt, and out of the House of Bondage —"

"And took you back by another route," said the doctor.

"Well, he failed," said Father Dillon. "But, Irishmen judge generously. They judge a man by his patriotic dispositions, as well as by his aggregate of work."

"And you actually think, you, an educated man, that Parnell was an Irish Patriot?"

"Certainly," said Father Dillon. "He didn't belong to our faith; but we don't heed that when a man is a genuine lover of Ireland."

"He loved Ireland, as much as he loved her priests," said the doctor. "He was no more an Irish patriot than Jonathan Swift. Both were English. There wasn't a drop of Celtic blood in their veins. Both had a score against Englishmen; and they sought to repay it. Swift would drag down the throne because he was refused a bishopric; Parnell would sink England in the sea, because he was rusticated from Cambridge. Both conferred some little benefits on Ireland by hating England. Both had the utmost contempt for Irishmen; and used Ireland merely as a tool of revenge. You know all that."

"I know," said Father Dillon, "that the morning I saw Parnell's death on the posters, I shed bitter tears."

"Precisely. There's the feminine race again. The handkerchief always ready. You and your countrymen want a little iron in your blood, Father Dillon. Believe me, Parnell shed no tears, no more than Napoleon. He would see a thousand evictions without a qualm. He saw a thousand Irishmen locked up in gaol without one feeling of anger, until the detective laid his hand on his own shoulder in Morrison's Hotel. So much for his patriotism. As for his aggregate work for Ireland, I tell you it was the people behind Parnell, and not Parnell himself, that won his battles. It was the poor devils that suffered themselves to be flung out on the road, that went to gaol, to the plank-bed and the skilly, not to the first-class hotel fare of Kilmainham; it was poor Davitt and O'Brien that won back the land from the stranger. But I would forgive him a good deal but that he made the Irish a more servile race than ever. You are aware that 'his Mimbers' dare not speak to him in the House of Commons. Sir Wm. Butler tells us how on one occasion he rode with Parnell through the Glens of Wicklow, and the wretched people gathered at the cross-roads to greet him, cap in hand, of course, and bodies bent to the earth in the chronic attitude of Irishmen. The mighty despot, the new Napoleon, took no more notice of them than if they were dogs. He hated and despised the whole race, priests and people. He used their rude hands to tear down the fabric of English domination; and that was all he cared for them. But, bad as all that was, what are we to think now, when his *asseclæ*, as the Pope called them, are actually assuming the same lordly airs, and telling us that we dare not use the first natural privilege of humanity, to think and speak independently?"

"You shouldn't allow that wretched little newspaper article to worry you so much," said Father Dillon, soothingly. "And it is quite useless to try and break down the sense of gratitude towards Parnell. The Napoleonic legend and the Parnell legend will outlast our time."

"I quite agree with you," said the doctor, more calmly.

"But the day will come, when men 'will rise from out the beast;' and then, they will turn around, and condemn the beast. Some day, some brave man will arise and ask the pertinent question:

"Suppose that, on the momentous eve of Waterloo, when the news was whispered to the Duke of Wellington in the Duchess of Richmond's ball-room that Napoleon's legions were sweeping up from Quatre-Bras and Ligny, and confronting the British army at Waterloo, — suppose that instead of slipping out quietly as he did, and riding direct to the field of battle, he had remained behind dallying with the fine ladies at the ball; and suppose that, next day, the British army was routed and destroyed, and that Napoleon had marched on, and taken Brussels, and flung back the liberties of Europe for another fifty years, what would have been the fate of Wellington?"

"He would have been promptly courtmartialled, degraded, and shot," said Reginald Hunt, excitedly.

"But, he had won victory after victory for England?" said the doctor.

"No matter; he would be shot without appeal, and without mercy, and justly."

"But he had won Badajoz, Albuera, Vimiera, Saragossa, Corunna?" persisted the doctor, as if arguing against himself.

"It would have made not the slightest difference; he had sacrificed all."

"But he had gone on from Sir Arthur to the Marquis of Wellesley, from the Marquis of Wellesley to the Duke of Wellington; and had been voted £150,000 by Parliament?" said the doctor.

"It would all be forgotten, or rather turned into the furnace of rage against him for his great betrayal. There was not a man in England or in Europe, that wouldn't vote: Death *sans phrase!*"

"And they would have been right," said the doctor. "And until we judge the conduct of our 'leaders' with the same Spartan, or martial severity, I mean of course morally, they

will put their heels on our necks, and betray us, as Parnell betrayed us."

This time Father Dillon was silent. Mr. Hunt took up the argument.

"The strangest feature in that matter was," he said, "the enthusiasm that tyrant roused in the breasts of Englishmen. It was not only Byron and Hazlitt that worshipped him; but tens of thousands of Englishmen, whose homes and liberties he would have ruthlessly destroyed. And the legend is growing, rather than diminishing. You would not find an Englishman today to say that Wellington was a greater or nobler man than Napoleon."

"Then you richly deserve that some day, French or German troopers shall stable their horses in Westminster Abbey," said the doctor. "Good Heavens! To think of it. Did not Wellington rout the conquerors of Europe again and again in Spain? Wasn't Soult recalled, because he dared not face him? Was there not a perfectly fair fight at Waterloo, the preponderance of men and metal being with the French? Do the annals of history, from Herodotus downward, present a nobler spectacle than that Iron Duke, steady, immovable as brass, watching all his generals massacred around him, his regiments reduced to one or two men; and yet holding the field with indomitable perseverance, until the cloud of dust arose on the horizon, and the braggarts and brigands of Europe were finally dispersed? Believe me if Wellington had commanded the magnificent battalions of Austrians, Russians, and Prussians, who fought against Napoleon under incompetent generals at Austerlitz, Wagram, Jena, Lutzen, the annals of Europe would have had a different tale to tell."

"Well, the verdict of the world, even of England, is against you," said Father Dillon. "Napoleon, the bound Prometheus on St. Helena —"

"For God's sake, stop that, Father Dillon, or we shall quarrel," said the doctor. "'The bound Prometheus!' The puny, petulant, querulous little mannikin, complaining, like

some old maid, of his custards and his wine. A great man is best recognised in adversity. But the most enthusiastic Bonapartist cannot say that his hero was anything but a poor, whimpering, selfish little mortal, railing against everyone and everything, because his bath was not heated, or his omelettes cooked. Some day, believe me —”

But he was interrupted by an exclamation from Father Dillon, who was facing the door and who now advanced with hand extended to greet a handsome young naval officer who was looking around somewhat uncertainly.

“Hallo, Willie, this you? We gave you up. A merry Christmas. How are you?”

And then the boy gravely saluted his father, whose anger against the dead evaporated in face of the living.

“Have you seen your mother?” he said.

“Yes, and had a bit of Christmas dinner,” the boy said. “Then we thought you were spending too much time here; so I have been despatched to summon you upstairs. The ladies are waiting. But, let me have one cigarette.”

Just before the heated discussion in the smoke-room commenced, and whilst the hostess and Mrs. Skelton were chatting in the drawing-room about domestic and other affairs, the former sometimes drawing her fingers across the piano-keys, as if warning these white and black magicians that their time was coming, the old poet, seated in an armchair, was eloquently holding forth his views on what he deemed the most sacred of arts to Miss Hope, who was an attentive and sympathetic listener. He had been rhapsodising for half an hour and then he said:

“They were the greatest, and the most unhappy of human-kind,” he said of the poets of all ages and climes. “The greatest, because they alone know the terrible secrets of Isis; the most unhappy, because of that knowledge. The mystery of life lies lightly on the multitude. They eat and drink, marry and are given in marriage; laugh loudly, and cry a little, only a little. They don’t understand. They do not

think. They are incapable of thinking. They are busied about surface things, — war, politics, commerce, government, taxes. They know no more than the commonest hind (who studies his pigs and his grass calculating into how much silver he can turn them) of the secrets, the arcana of the Universe. The poet alone stands aloof. He is the priest of Nature. He is a celibate and a solitary. In lonely communings with the great mother she speaks to him in language that no one else can understand, in language that he can only feebly interpret. For there never yet was a poet that said or could say all that he meant. Somewhere, sometime, he will find words adequate to his thoughts; but, not here below. And this despair of making himself intelligible it is that makes poets such an unhappy race. Did you ever hear of Kleist?"

"No," said Miss Hope. "I cannot remember ever having heard the name."

"Some day you will. He committed one unpardonable offence —"

But there was a knocking at the hall-door here, and a dragging of door-bells, that seemed to startle the hostess disagreeably. She drew away her fingers from the piano, and listened anxiously.

"That's an urgent call for the doctor," she said to her guests. "How disagreeable. They always seem to keep these calls until an unseasonable time. And the doctor is too patient and gentle."

But no! There was the sound of laughing on the stairs; and, in a moment, the little housemaid, Beatrice Ommaney, opened the door, and said smilingly:

"Master Willie, Ma'am."

The happy mother hugged that young officer, who was quite a head and shoulders above her, as if she would dislocate every button on his uniform; and then, she introduced him to the guests with an accent of maternal pride that was feebly concealed.

"We missed you at dinner," she said, with tears of joy in her eyes. "Why did you disappoint us?"

"Never mind, mother. It's a long story. But, look here, I'm as hungry as a hawk. Was there even a turkey-bone left?"

It appears there was. At least, Beatrice was able to place on the dining-room table, a few minutes later, a fairly substantial relic of the Christmas dinner. The lordly waiter considered that his work was done for that evening. The boy was waited on by his mother, who devoured him with her eyes, as he ate slowly and with evident relish.

The poet did not resume his monologue to his fair listener. The advent of the young lad seemed to have changed the aspect of things. But before the gentlemen returned to the drawing-room, he said:

"One observation you made this evening, Miss Hope, is haunting me, — that we poets are nearest of all to an understanding of the intricate mysteries of your Church. Would you read over at your leisure this little carol, or Christmas canticle; and let me know if it expresses any Catholic truth?"

SESSION TWENTY-FIRST

THERE is always a good deal of anxiety after a dinner-party, even of small dimensions. The hostess is anxious to know whether it was a success — whether there were any of those little omissions which, like one false note in singing, imperil the reputation of the *artiste*. In certain houses, as well as in certain operettas, people expect perfection; the difference being that in the latter they pay well for it; in the former, it is expected gratuitously. In the case of our hostess, however, the anxiety was swallowed up by her pride in her boy. The midnight chimes had long ceased, when the happy mother, and the father, who had forgotten the very existence of Napoleon and Parnell, his *bêtes-noirs*, dismissed the young lieutenant to his room; and then came back to exchange congratulations with each other. Then, the little housemaid, Beatrice Ommaney, could not sleep. In the forefront of the evening's entertainment, she had been appalled and abashed into a kind of reverential awe of the mighty waiter; but, when the latter lay in a prostrate and yet dignified position in the kitchen, and the sudden vision of the young officer, with all his gold lace and general splendour burst upon her enraptured vision, she found her worship diverted, but by no means diminished. The wren-boys were knocking at the front-door, when she woke from an uneasy slumber, in which the young officer, with a plum-pudding in place of his head, was just offering her a *bon-bon* cracker to be pulled. Our good friend, too, Reginald Hunt, was somewhat uneasy, as he returned home to his dreary lodgings. Those remarks about convents and vocations seemed to distress him greatly; and he found that, owing to the too assiduous attentions of Mr. Marshall, he had not been able to seek or obtain an explanation from Miss Hope. That

young lady, again (when she reached her room, and found that her faithful servant had left her lamp lighting, and her fire sparkling in her grate), instead of at once seeking repose and saying her prayers, took one or two anxious glances at her face and figure in her long toilet-mirror, and then, after divesting herself of her cloak, she flung a wrapper around her shoulders, and sank into an armchair. There was absolute silence all round. She could hear it tingling in her ears; and she gave herself up to a regular orgie of dreamy reflection, partly pleasant, sometimes alarming, yet always sweet because of its very anxiety. She was young, and the face of that boy, fresh from the buffetings of winds and rain, rose up before her. Then, the anxious look which she caught in the face of Reginald Hunt, when cloister-life was alluded to, came back to her. She would explain, she thought, on the first opportunity. Then, the fine face of the old gray poet blotted out his younger rivals. She drew the paper he had given her from her bosom, and leaning back towards the lamplight, read:

THE FLOWER-SPIRITS

Flower of the Dawn, go by!
For thou wilt break and bourgeon into birth
Of leafy light along the gladdened earth —
The golden guerdon of the air and sky.
Flower of the Dawn, go by!

Flower of the Noon, go past!
Thy shining petals covering with a mist
Of radiant splendours hill and dale unkissed,
And shadowy mountains desolate and vast.
Flower of the Noon, go past!

Flower of the Night, incline
Thy starsprent blossoms, silvery and pale,
What time the Moon-Queen labours to escale
The purpled sky between the fir and pine.
Flower of the Night, incline!

Flower of the Field, depart!
The lark is singing to thy fragrant breast,
That bends above his hidden, meadowy nest.
To thee he pours his deep, melodious heart.
Flower of the Field, depart!

Flower of the Thorn, remain!
For thy pale leaves are streaked and lined with blood,
Like that which sprinkled Mary as she stood,
Her hands enclasped behind the Holy Rood.
The highest bliss is aye the bliss of Pain.
Flower of the Thorn, remain!

“How strange,” she thought. “There’s not a word about Christmas here, and yet he called the poem a Christmas Carol. Not a word of joy or hope, but a farewell to dawns and night-stars and flowers, — all that is bright and beautiful in the world. And then:

“‘Flower of the Thorn, remain!’

Thorns that pierce and agonise and bring blood — symbols, of course, of anguish and sorrow, and heart-breakings; of hopes disappointed, dreams dissipated, loves grown cold, and all the blessedness of earth vanishing under darkness and the eclipse of youth and hope. How strange! It is only an old man could write thus. And yet —”

There seemed to glimmer out of the past, faintly at first, and then more clearly, certain lessons of her own youth, rather dimly appreciated at the time, for experience had not strengthened reflection; and these grew and waxed strong now, as she held the open paper in her hands, and many a meditation, made in the convent chapel, under the dim lamplight in the cold winter mornings, seemed to wake up in her memory; and pictures of sorrow and shame, of thorn-crowned heads, and bleeding wounds, and hearts pierced through and through with swords of pain, rose up before her, and told her that life was warfare and suffering, and walking

with bleeding feet on sharp stones and up along steep hills. And then, at last, she remembered how the final words of strength and comfort were exactly the words that she had just read in this weird poem:

“The highest bliss is aye the bliss of Pain.”

She pondered the matter deeply. Then suddenly shuddered as she thought, “Is this prophetic? Can that old man have preconised my future in these words? Have I to suffer in order to reach the highest bliss?”

She rose up swiftly, and was alarmed to find her little mantel-piece clock just on the stroke of “one.” She fell asleep, but the words were murmuring in her brain:

“Flower of the Thorn, remain!”

She woke up next morning; and heard her memory muttering:

“Flower of the Thorn, remain!”

Father Dillon, too, left the guest-house, went home, and threw himself into his armchair with a mind full of anxiety. He was getting afraid of the doctor. He knew his character thoroughly, and regarded him with the deepest respect. He knew his single-mindedness, his absolute sincerity, his intolerance of a lie, no matter how it disguised itself. He had often laughed at the doctor's brusqueness with the vast number of *malades imaginaires* who came to consult him. “Give up all this eating and drinking, Madam; live simply, and in the open air!” “There is absolutely nothing wrong with your throat, Madam; absolutely nothing. It is pure imagination. Get a bicycle, and a good strong one, for you are abnormally heavy, and go about a good deal.”

“But, doctor, won't you give me something, — some liniment or tonic, to relieve my throat?”

"Certainly not. Why should I? There's nothing wrong in your throat."

"But, Dr. — always prescribes for me. He is so sympathetic."

"Then, Madam, go to Dr. —. I can do nothing for you."

And they went to the sleek, sympathetic physician, who examined, and shook his head gravely, and ordered divers bottles of cold water slightly flavoured with orange, or spirits of chloroform, and for which the happy chemists charged two and ninepence each, and declared themselves highly honoured by such orders. But the brusque Dr. Holden, who dismissed hypochondriacs summarily, had often, as the priest knew well, remained up all night with a sick child, who was choking with diphtheria; or with some poor woman, struggling in the agonies of childbirth, where there was no fat fee to be expected — only the consciousness of duty well done and unrecognised. But such men are troublesome. Their veracity is a prickly thing. It stings and draws blood. And, after the doctor's wild diatribes against Napoleon and Parnell, Father Dillon had an uneasy feeling that he might spring an unpleasant controversy any moment on the sacred society, and with fatal results. Not that Father Dillon had any acute feelings about the political situation. He thought that here there could be but one doctrine — Unity at any cost! One hideous spectre — disunion!

It did not tend to compose his nerves, or allay his suspicions, when at the very next meeting of the *Sunetoi*, which was held in Mrs. Skelton's drawing-room on New Year's Night, the doctor suddenly and brusquely asked:

"Is there anything particular before us tonight, Father Dillon?"

Father Dillon looked around rather helplessly, and rubbed his hand across his forehead, as if to stimulate recollection.

"I am not quite sure! Did I forget? I think, Professor, I asked you — or was it Miss Fraser? —"

"Not me," said the Professor.

"My paper is for the next meeting," said Miss Fraser.

"I must have forgotten —" said Father Dillon, much embarrassed.

"Never mind!" said the doctor. "What I was just saying at our last meeting was this: Look, I wrote it out. It is important. May I read it?"

"Certainly," said the *Sunetoi*. "Certainly," murmured Father Dillon, in a very uncertain tone.

The doctor, unfolding a great roll of manuscript, read:

"The greatest misfortune that ever fell upon a nation is, when the people abdicate, and fling aside all their privileges at the dictation of an orator, or a demagogue, or in obedience to a false, though attractive, sophism. The ancients were more tenacious of their rights than the moderns. They had also a keener political sense, — a deeper insight into the principles that make the welfare of nations. And we know how they detested anyone who attempted to infringe on their rights, or whose power was growing and developing through intellectual energy on the one hand and popular acquiescence on the other; or through the more dubious methods of popular bribes, no matter how disguised under aspects of benevolence or philanthropy. They were jealous of their freedom. They resented the first faintest attempt to limit it, or coerce the popular suffrage. They drove Socrates from Athens; and gave him his goblet of hemlock. Through the hand of Brutus, they checked the ambition of Cæsar. No public service, no political or warlike triumph, no polished periods, or rounded sentences; no 'glory of orator, warrior, or song' blinded them to the grave imperilling of their most sacred interests. They gave their great men their due; but bade them keep their place. The people never lost their *magisterium* — the vast power which Nature and the God of Nature placed in their hands — to be used for their protection; to be sacrificed at their peril. We find the same characteristic in all strong masculine nations. The English, who, of moderns, most

closely resemble the sturdy masculine Romans, share their jealousy of great men. Magnificent as were the triumphs of the Duke of Wellington, we know that, when he entered the political arena, he was soon made to understand that the people were as supreme in the hustings and in Parliament as he was upon the field of battle; and the iron shutters, which he had to place before his windows in Apsley House to guard them against the fury of a London mob, reminded him that even his invincible battalions were as powerless as the armies of Sennacherib before the breath of the angel of the Lord. And the same people, ever jealous of their rights, never lease supreme power to either of the political parties who from time to time control the chariot of the State; and the moment Whigs or Tories assume a tone or aspect of ascendancy, that moment they are flung into the cold shade of Opposition by an overwhelming popular vote. Now, the very contrary is observable in the weaker, and feminine races. France, for centuries, accepted the rule of Kings. France allowed itself to be bled white by taxation, from which nobles and princes were exempt. France trembled before the wheel and the axe, wielded by aristocrats and their followers. France mutely accepted the Royal *lettres de cachet* and silently passed into the Bastille. Then, France, like a woman, flew into hysterics, scolded through her orators, scratched and tore, and bit and cursed and murdered. Then she got tired, and sat down again under a military despot; and saw, with feminine vanity, two millions of her children torn from her breast, and mashed into bloody compost for half the fields of Europe, because she heard the drums beating the *Marseillaise*, and the madmen shouting, *La Gloire*. And since then, she is the sport of adventurers and political desperadoes, of Radicals and Socialists; until now, thirty millions of French voters are moved as if they were the puppets in a country theatre, at the voice of some Parisian Jacobin, who probably has not a drop of French blood in his veins. At the last election, in one *arrondissement*, four hundred dead men voted. The registers, the ballot-

boxes, the presiding officers were all in the hands of a Freemason clique; and the wretched people, sodden and besotted by avarice and selfishness, turned round like Lotus-Eaters, and whimpered to those who would rouse them and save: 'Let us alone! What is the price of wheat?' A few weak voices cried: 'Your navy is so much rusty old iron; your army is demoralised; your finances are exhausted; it is only the British fleet that is holding back those terrible Germans from sweeping over your borders, and crumpling you up again like tissue-paper. Arise! awake! or be for ever fallen!' And they turn, and look with their bleared eyes: 'Let us alone. Only reduce the rates!' The end of such a people is not far off."

"Now," continued the doctor, "we Irish, another Celtic and feminine race, are drifting into exactly the same condition. For the last thirty years, we have abdicated. We have placed our political and moral freedom at the disposal of every party leader who, not by his own prowess, but by the strength and sufferings of the people, had been enabled to gain some paltry success — some fractional part of human liberties, or some reluctant acknowledgment that the most ordinary privileges of civilised peoples have been denied us, but that now it would be incompatible with the Imperial Idea to concede what are our indefeasible rights. Then, the country goes into hysterics. The slave thinks that a link is loosed in his chain; and he leaps with joy only to find that the fetters are still galling his feet, and that their staples are riveted faster than ever in the granite of Imperial supremacy. But he has time to forget his eternal agony in the relief of a moment; and to kiss the feet of the man who, whilst affecting to emancipate the helot from the tyranny of England, has stolen the last shred of the creature's independence, and substituted one despotism for another, or reduplicated it. Hence, the pitiable infatuation that salutes the new master with the cries of 'Our Leader,' 'our immortal Leader,' 'our Washington,' 'our uncrowned King,' etc., whilst the slave is peremptorily bidden to the

polling-booths to vote according to his master's dictation, and never to dare either to conceive, or express, one independent opinion. In every other country in the world, where constitutional Government obtains, the constituencies are the masters; the members, whom they elect, are their servants and representatives. In Ireland, the case is reversed. The Members are the dictators; the constituencies are the obedient and tolerant slaves. In England, the Member of Parliament who would neglect to visit his constituents, at least once a year, and render an account of his stewardship, would be promptly sent about his business. In Ireland, a Member would consider it beneath his dignity to unveil the face of Mokanna, and show himself to his admiring people. In many cities and electoral districts in Ireland, the names of their Members are utterly unknown. The people have a dim idea that someone was elected without opposition at the last upheaval, and that is all. But the idea of any Irish Member going down and consulting his constituents is as remote as the supposition that the Pope should consult a Connemara congregation before issuing an Encyclical. Still further back is the idea that any elector in Ireland should have the right to question or challenge the acts of the Nationalists in Parliament. That's a thing not to be thought of — a stretch of fancy that borders on the incredible, a depth of audacity that is almost sacrilegious. When in one of those lucid intervals that will supervene on even the most atrophied and palsied intellect, some unhappy man dares to criticise or ask a question in politics, he is instantly sat upon, and cries of 'hydra-headed fanatic,' 'intolerable disruptionist,' echo all round him, and subdue his impertinence into the silent and slavish acquiescence of his countrymen. He feels that he has been a rash and insolent intruder on domains where he never had a right to intrude; and that in exercising the most ordinary privilege of a civilised being, he has contravened the will of the nation, and become a contumacious rebel against the universal opinion, a setter-back of the country for some other

decades of years. Hence wise men in that wisdom that comes from selfishness and a desire for ignoble ease, prefer to submit tamely to this national disfranchisement, this total extinction of all popular rights, this assertion of undisputed sovereignty over the wills and consciences of four millions of obedient and passive slaves. What is the immediate consequence? The rejection of measures which, if accepted, would have been found quite equal in their operation to the most extreme national demand. What is the future consequence? In the event of autonomy being ever granted to Ireland, you will have a people, so unaccustomed to exercise their political privileges, that they will be the sport of every extremist and Socialist; so sunken in ignoble ease, that they will allow the most drastic and revolutionary measures to be passed without protest; so incapable of thinking for themselves, that they will willingly place the duty and labour of thinking in the hands of mercenary and unscrupulous deputies; so apathetic and indifferent to the vast issues that lie before the nation, the vast interests that are involved, that they will see these things disposed of by a gang of revolutionaries sent up from the seething corruption of our towns and cities, and enabled to carry out every nefarious project, because their rule is undisputed, and their sleeping partners have neither energy to protest, or power to oppose. Yes! the moment a nation is taught to seek its ease, and let others do the thinking, the moment the individuals composing the nation abandon their political rights, and become absorbed in promoting their self-interest, that moment political power passes of necessity into the hands of a few able and designing men; and the country shall never recover its political independence except along the bloody paths of revolution. And thither are we tending so surely as our solar system is moving towards the constellation of Hercules in the Heavens."

"I have not often troubled you, Father Dillon," said the doctor, folding up his paper, "nor you, ladies and gentlemen, with my lucubrations; but if someone doesn't speak, the very

stones will cry out. And, perhaps, the subject is one that lends itself to debate. If so, I shall be happy to hear any adverse opinions on my paper. The hour runs late tonight. Shall we postpone the discussion, Father Dillon, to our next meeting?"

"It is the rule," said Father Dillon, and he was glad to be able to quote it. He was getting into troubled waters.

SESSION TWENTY-SECOND

FATHER DILLON looked forward to the next meeting with something like affright. He did not know what might happen. It was quite true that the other members would probably take but an academic interest in the question; and, if they cared to enter on a debate, it would be with the calm indifference with which they would approach any neutral or unexciting subject. He began to wonder why such men as the doctor were born; or, if the nativity of such were inevitable, why they could not look upon life and its issues with philosophic placidity, or at least Saxon stolidity. That paper, clearly, was written at a white heat. The lines and letters flamed with intense passion. The man's faith and convictions were written there almost with his heart's blood.

"That unfortunate newspaper paragraph," thought Father Dillon. "How little the scribbler, who wrote that squib on the doctor, and probably forgot all about it the next minute, could imagine into what a magazine he flung his match!"

But the inevitable had to be faced; and the young priest could only hope that perhaps the Professor, or Mr. Hunt would take up the subject, and dissolve the dangerous and heated elements in some tepid and harmless platitudes.

At the meeting, he gently strove to gain time by asking Mr. Marshall to read the long-promised poem: *The Palace of Sleep*. But Mr. Marshall was not prepared. He then turned to Miss Fraser, and asked her to read her paper. The usual course was to discuss the former paper first. But the doctor did not pretend to notice. He only smiled; and turned in his chair. And Miss Fraser commenced to read:

"There is a word in common use, when we are dealing with

the most momentous question in life, and which, I think, we must discard. That word is Education. Because, the process designated by the etymological meaning of the word — that of drawing out by exercise the faculties of the young, is one that must be set aside as speedily as possible, if our systems of juvenile training are not to remain the lamentable failures they have hitherto been. In some misty and indefinable manner we are recognising that we have been working all along on wrong lines. The repeated changes in school-programmes, the substitution of one system for another, which is no sooner adopted than it is superseded, the rather stupid and undecided manner in which educationists try experiments on youthful minds, as if no principle were accepted, but life was to be one long tentative issue, — all these things seem to converge towards some revolutionary method, that will supplant all others, and be accepted as the final determination of the question. Now, in this, as in all other questionable or debatable subjects, there is one safe principle that may be followed; and that is, to adapt our methodology to Nature's; to follow her guidance as far as we may. For we are a part of Nature — a constituent in that vast *Kosmos*, whose operations we alone of all sentient beings can study and wonder at. We are not outside spectators, sitting in the gallery of a theatre, where vast conjuring operations are carried on for our amusement. We ourselves are part and parcel of the Universe, subject to its laws, affected by its changes, wondering and speculating about the track of a comet today, or the sudden occultation of a star, whose light was shot from its source three thousand years ago; and then suddenly turning upon ourselves to continue our wonder at the little microcosm on this grain of sand in space. But we cannot separate ourselves from the Universe without. Its laws are our laws; and we must obey them, or perish. Now, if we examine Nature's pedagogic methods, we shall see at once that she commences all her operations with a view to the perpetuity or continuance of a species or a unit. She gives no life without

adequacy of subsistence. She no sooner places the egg than she feeds it. Patiently she waits, never exacting work, except when the tiny organism is perfected. Her business with everything young and unformed is to feed it; and she never demands the exercise of an organ, until it is fitted for its special department by perfected growth and development. And if by accident an organ is suddenly called upon to act without having reached that development, it is instantly atrophied and rendered useless for the remainder of its existence. Following this operation — this instinctive work of Nature, you will perceive at once how fatal is the process which we pursue in the training of our young minds. For, long before the faculties have grown and are become developed, we insist on forcing them into exercises of thought for which they are absolutely unsuited, with the result that growth is checked, the mental organs, called suddenly to act, develop perhaps an unnatural precocity of power, which ends in premature paralysis; and the faculties of the mind, strained at their tenderest and weakest point, never recover their elasticity, but remain to the end dull and broken parts in the whole mental mechanism. Hence, we notice that just as athletes seldom live long, because physical nature is forced beyond her capacity, and as youthful mental prodigies develop into middle-age mattoids, so the minds of children, before they have begun to develop certain faculties, are forced to exercise them, with the fatal result that they lose their spring, and become inoperative during after-existence. It is a maxim that children should be taught to walk before they can run; and that even walking may result in deformity. We do not put dumb-bells in babies' fingers; nor Indian clubs into the hands of boys. Such exercise would very soon tell in spinal curvatures and other troubles. And it is just as unwise to force into unhealthy exercise the mental faculties until they have broadened and deepened into maturity. Again, there are some faculties that come to maturity and demand exercise long before others. In childhood, the emotional and imagina-

tive faculties have reached maturity and are in full play long before the reasoning powers have awakened. There is hardly on earth a prettier sight than that of a child, wakened from sleep, but not yet risen from its cot or cradle, but revelling in its own fancies, and talking in the unintelligible, but delightful prattle of innocence to the creatures which its fancy has formed. It is not a soliloquy; it is a conversation. The imagination has conjured up all kinds of beautiful beings and things, and it holds converse with them as if they were real. It will go on for hours, chatting and prattling, until someone, nurse or mother, breaks in, and Titania and her elves depart. Some of our educationists think this deplorable; and would substitute for those delightful dreams of childhood some hard mechanical study demanding an attention which the child is unable to give, with the result of a paralysis of the imagination on the one hand, and a premature forcing, on the other, of a faculty that has barely dawned in the mind of the child. Again, the child-mind is emotional; and it appears to be the one occupation of ill-starred pedagogues to check these emotions and make children what is called sensible. Yes! you want to train that little girl in what you call ratiocinative processes; and hence you cut open her doll, which she knew to be flesh and blood, like herself, and you prove that it is only a piece of cotton stuffed with sawdust. You have destroyed a world; and given the child a rag. The worst of our own sufferings in life is disillusion. All along through the upward pathway of life we are dropping fancy after fancy, until in middle age we stand bare of every beautiful idea that helped us to soar above the banalities of existence, and bear our crosses at least with equanimity. It is always a painful revelation to find that our beautiful butterfly is after all but a caterpillar; or when youth finds that

“her beauty’s best attire
Was woven still by the snow-white choir.’

or when

“‘At last she comes to his hermitage,
Like a bird from the woodlands to the cage,
And the gay enchantment is undone,
A gentle wife, but fairy none.’”

“Ha!” said Mr. Marshall, breaking in on the reading. “That’s mine! That’s my poet! That’s my Emerson’s ‘Each and All.’” He was quite excited.

“I wasn’t aware,” said Miss Fraser, smiling, “that Mr. Marshall had a monopoly of Emerson.”

“True, true,” said that gentleman. “I beg a thousand pardons for interrupting. Pray continue, Miss Fraser, pray continue!”

“But, if this is true,” read Miss Fraser, “is it not almost a crime to interfere with the glorious enchantments of childhood; and, under pretence of developing powers that are yet held in abeyance by Nature, break up the golden dreams, which are the little heritage the child has brought from Heaven. There is a still further, and even more fatal blunder in our modern educational systems. It is the total elimination of ethical teaching. In very childhood explanations are given of the mysteries of religion that are a puzzle to theologians. When the little intellect advances, it is taught that there are terrible controversies raging in the world, and it must do its part. The sweetness of Christian Charity, the glory of Christian Love, the sublime unselfishness of Christian Doctrine, the splendour of Christian and maidenly purity, the dignity of the Christian character, the far-off golden dream of the Christian’s final beatitude — all that is noble, all that is pure, all that is holy is kept secret from the young emotional creatures at our feet, whose very souls are palpitating with desires as holy as those of the Virgin Apostle, and whose dreams are along the lines of the third heavens, which Paul of Tarsus saw. And then we complain that these young souls develop untruthfulness and selfishness and perhaps even uncleanness. How dare we expect otherwise? As you sow so shall you reap.

And when the tares and the cockle show in the wheat, let us not say, an enemy hath done this. We have wrought the mischief ourselves.

“What then should be done? I answer, Feed the child! Stop exercising its immature faculties, and forcing a culture, which is against the laws of Nature. Give up ideas of drawing out and developing the three faculties, memory, will, and understanding. That process will come of itself when the mind is thoroughly nurtured. But what is the mind’s food? I answer, intellectually, Ideas; morally, Ideals. The assimilation of Ideas is food and exercise together just as the assimilation of corporal food exercises the bodily organs without effort. The process must be automatic. Philosophers tell us that all our ideas come from the senses; that there is no such thing as Innate Ideas. The first concept of a child is of a something that is Not — I; the second concept is of space; the third concept is the Ego Itself — self-consciousness — the Dawn of Reason. Now, it is as important to put healthy ideas into the child-mind, as to put healthy food into its mouth. And it is as important to give it ideas which it can assimilate, as to give it food it can digest. Meat for men; milk for babes. That is, we must give the child the mental pabulum suited to the faculties that are most thoroughly developed. What are these? As I have said, imagination and emotion. I would help a child’s imagination, therefore, with just the things it can take in and make its own — fairy tales, the folk-lore of the world, Queen Mab and her attendants, Undine, the fisher-maidens of German romance, the snow-images and the forest-fays of Hans Andersen and Grimm. I would show them the fairy tales of Nature, her wonders, surpassing the wildest imagination; and I would teach them to reverence Nature in her external workings, in her miracles, in her marvels, in her design. Then, I would lift their fancies higher towards God; and teach them that it is His Hand that has framed all these glories, and that we, too, are part and parcel of his eternal handiwork. When the child grows older

I would bring before its young fancy tales of tenderness and beauty, lives of nobleness and self-sacrifice; and I would show it how love is only won by love; and how the world holds in immortal remembrance those who have given their best for high and sacred causes. I would put my Plutarch into the hands of every boy; and feed his mind with wholesome ideas gathered from the great ones of antiquity. Thus, I would train the child to venerate first what is beautiful, then what is noble, lastly, what is most sacred and divine in that Life, that lived for us, has earned for us immortal life and all the fruits we shall earn by forming our conduct on the Divine pattern. And these are the lessons that will abide. In the storm and stress of after-life, when the will is weakening and the memory is losing hold of the pale pictures that were stamped upon it in youth, — a word, a line, from antique poetry or Gospel prose, will awaken the drowsy faculties, and call out again the noble figures that had been impressed upon the wax-tablets of the soul. What brought back from the burning suns of India and Australia so many architects, so many statesmen, so many authors, so many lawyers to the side of that lonely grave in Rugby Chapel? Why did those bearded men stand with uncovered heads and reverent mien above that flag that covered the dust of the revered dead? Was it Arnold's 'History of Rome?' Was it his lectures on the Classics? No, certainly not. It was the memory of those Sunday mornings, when they sat, as boys, there in those self-same benches; lifted up their eyes and saw that grave and reverend figure, heard those lessons of Christian manliness and self-reverence that were to them a staff in the hand through the perils of their earthly pilgrimage. Yes! Feeble woman as I am," continued Miss Fraser, in a voice that was now broken with emotion, "I would pull down with one hand every monument raised by slaves to the despots and tyrants of the earth; and I would raise with the other pyramids and statues that would immortalise the memories of the world's teachers and saints —"

"Bravo! Bravo!" said the doctor enthusiastically. "You

would drag down Vendôme Columns and plant a cross amid the ruins of every world-Coliseum! Go on, Miss Fraser. This is refreshing!"

And Miss Fraser, smiling, continued:

"Of course, as reason develops, and the faculties of attention and observation wake up and demand appropriate exercise, I would put the young mind through a course of mathematics to enable it to reason accurately, and weigh arguments, and reach conclusions that shall be scientifically correct. Because that mind-sharpening is useful for many reasons; and the habit of mental concentration, that is likely to be dissipated by the desultory and promiscuous reading of after-life, will at least remain powerful enough to check hasty and immature judgments on men and their principles. It will teach them the value and the importance of words, the necessity of weighing well our own utterances lest we should deceive; the utterances of others lest they should deceive us. Nothing does more harm than wild unbalanced language; and it is to be specially guarded against in this country, where Celtic *fierté* supplies eloquence at will, and Celtic irresponsibility uses words without grave consideration of their meaning, and of their consequences. You will have noticed that all the great philosophers were also great mathematicians. They passed from the abstraction of signs to the abstraction of ideas; but they carried with them that intense precision that was formed by close concentration of mind in a process of reasoning where a moment's distraction would break up the chain of thought, and make an accurate conclusion impossible. And I am of opinion that amongst our greatest writers the one whose style was most fascinating, but whose judgments were most fallible, was the one whose early intellect was not formed in what might be called the ascetic school of pure mathematics. Then, when all is done, when the mind is filled with wholesome and happy ideas; when the soul is raised up to lofty ideals; when the faculties are strengthened and matured, I would place in the hands of the young the literature

of Greece and Rome, not perhaps for any moral training (although I believe our best thoughts, short of the transcendent mysteries of Revelation, are simply reproductions of ancient philosophy), but to complete the perfection of the building with the graces of the peristyle; to work out the completion of science by Art; to superimpose on the solid structure the elegancies that go far towards habituating the mind to those intellectual delights that form in our days, for all but the Epicurean of the club, or the butterfly of fashion, the grand resource against intellectual ennui on the one hand, or mental enfeeblement on the other."

"Really, Mr. Chairman," said Reginald Hunt, when the polite applause had subsided, "I have begun to think that Miss Fraser and Dr. Holden are in collusion; and have been collaborating these interesting papers, because they seem to run on parallel lines, — Miss Fraser, treating of education in general, and the doctor, of political education. And the parallelism seems closer, because if I have rightly understood the doctor's paper, he seems to think his countrymen are still in an infantile condition, politically speaking."

"Certainly," said the doctor. "By Nature, a shrewd, sharp, clever people, they have been debarred by English governments from all decent education; and by their political leaders from all chance of developing free and independent opinion. And I am also proud to make my acknowledgments to Miss Fraser for insisting that we shall not bow down the heads of our children before the idols of baseness; nor teach them a certain morality in our schools, and then compel them to worship the personifications of baseness and immorality in public life."

"I won't challenge that point," said Mr. Hunt. "But if you insist that your countrymen have not yet reached even adolescence, not to speak of maturity, is it not reasonable that they should be guided by men of experience and integrity in forming their political ideas? Children are liable to err, if not directed by their seniors in age and education and experience."

The doctor looked staggered for a moment. Out of his own mouth this young man was judging him. But he recovered himself rapidly.

"True," he said. "But with us it is a question of the blind leading the blind, or rather, of children teaching children; for what political education have our leaders? Your statesmen are trained lawyers and diplomatists. They have been brought up in offices, where every day they are brought face to face with all the intricacies of diplomacy and statesmanship. They are taught to read behind the words of public speakers their exact thoughts; and to find out by daily experience that language is only one method of concealing thought. Some of them have been abroad as *attachés* at foreign courts, where, even if they had not already lost every trace of honesty, they should be compelled to drop it. They have been dealing with the successors of the Metternichs and the Bismarcks of Europe. And our statesmen? They have just passed through University College and have got a B. A.; or they are strong farmers who know the value of a cow to a hair. But what chance have they in the political arena? Crude and untrained cleverness is no match for trained and perfected diplomacy."

"Yes, but after all, have you not as leaders of public opinion gentlemen who have not only served their apprenticeship to politics, but who have acquired some reputation as orators —?"

"Orators!" cried Dr. Holden, interrupting. "Why, there is the curse and bane of our race. We are all orators — stump orators, platform orators, hustings orators, Parliamentary orators. If the Lord would only strike the whole Irish race dumb, as he did the unbelieving High Priest, and not for nine months, but for nine years, perhaps we could reclaim our bogs and fens, and learn to grow something besides potatoes."

"But really now, doctor," said Father Dillon, "you must admit that we are not wholly unpractical. Everyone says that vast progress has been made these last few years; and

when once the chariot is set going, it will get on with increased momentum every year."

"True, Father Dillon," said the doctor, so mildly that the priest was surprised. "A few things have been done; but, do you ever think what *might have been done*? You got a glorious Land Act, called the Ashbourne, twenty-five years ago. A few happy tenants purchased under that Act; and are now practically the owners of their property. Then, the people were told, Wait! the landlords are doing too well! Wait! The land will be nationalised, and you shall have your farms for nothing. The people took the advice; and many is the sore heart over it today. Then they got the Wyndham Act. Again they commenced to buy, and fortunately for the country and themselves, a large proportion of Irish tenants have purchased their land. But again they were told that the landlords are too well treated; and again we have had an abortive Land Bill in Parliament; and some 100,000 tenants with their fingers in their mouths are looking over their neighbours' ditches, and will have to look for a considerable time, if I read the signs aright. A few years ago, you were offered Home Rule without the name. You were offered control of the entire administration of Ireland, all its great Boards, with an annual outlay of £4,000,000. You rejected it with scorn. A people, politically educated, should and would understand that, in political warfare, every vantage-ground should be seized, from which a further essay could be made. We want everything, or nothing. We shall end with the latter."

"Yes!" said Mr. Hunt languidly. "But, somehow we are drifting from the point. I cannot still see how you are to manage unless you place absolute confidence in your leaders. Once admit that the people are devoid of political wisdom; and you must necessarily throw the burden of directing them on their leaders. Are your people so backward as you say?"

"The people are intelligent enough," said the doctor, "but they are kept in a state of pupillage by their masters —"

"Now, now, doctor, let us be fair," said Father Dillon.

"You know right well that the people have practically no knowledge on political subjects. Take any large parish in Ireland. I don't care where. Take any large town of 8,000 or 9,000 or 10,000 inhabitants. How many of these, although prosperous merchants, professional men, etc., could stand on a platform and talk for one quarter-hour on any subject of public interest? How many have studied, or could speak intelligently on Local Government extension; on Education, Primary, Secondary, or University; on the fisheries of Ireland; on the development of the water-power of Ireland; on the utilisation of the peat-bogs of Ireland; on Emigration; or the thousand and one subjects that are clamouring for public attention? How many, do you say? Fifty?"

The doctor shook his head.

"Forty?"

"No!"

"Thirty? Twenty? Ten? Five?"

"Perhaps, five," said the doctor. "But, my dear sir, don't you see you are proving my thesis, which is that a highly intelligent race are kept in a state of pupillage by the men who, because they think they have achieved a little success, now arrogate the supreme right of controlling a nation's destinies without ever consulting the voice of that nation itself? It is quite true that the nation has had no political education; and naturally indolent, is happy to be relieved of the trouble of thinking. But is this desirable? Is it wise, or prudent, to place supreme and unquestioned power in the hands of eighty or ninety Members, who, in turn, and for obvious reasons, are mere puppets in the hands of an autocrat, or, at most, of a committee? Even if we admit that our present interests are in safe hands, what about our future? Dangerous elements are seething and foaming all over the world. Do you hope that Ireland is going to remain untouched? Let me suppose that you have obtained your Irish Parliament. Who will be elected thereunto? With the vast masses of the people sunk in political apathy, totally devoid of political training,

the willing victims of every outrageous demagogue who has got 'the gift of the gab,' do you suppose that it is Constitutional 'Moderates' will be elected to your Senate-Houses? No! But the wildest Socialist, the most rampant agitator, — the man who will promise most to the mob, and who will most fiercely denounce property, religion, and decency. You will cry out against it! Too late! The Lotus-Eaters will turn in their potato-patches, and ask: 'Let us alone! What is the price of oats?'"

"But this is all wild denunciation," Father Dillon said. He was somewhat nettled at the turn the debate was taking. "It is so easy to criticise, and find fault. But what do you suggest? How can you remedy matters?"

"It is extremely simple," said the doctor blandly. "I would say to your leaders: Take the people into your confidence! Treat them as intelligent beings, not as automatic, penny-in-the-slot voters and subscribers. Let every county have the right of summoning an annual convention, to be composed, not of the tag-rag and bob-tail of every little parish organisation, but by the elected representatives of the already elected Boards and Councils of the County. This is the only popular, because the only elected representation, because it depends absolutely on the already given suffrages of the people. Let your Members meet those delegates, and submit to their judgment the work that has been accomplished during the session. Let there be perfect freedom of discussion, — no bluffing, no violence, but the calm deliberation of thoughtful and honest men. Let these County Conventions select delegates for a National Convention, a real Parliament of the Irish people. Two hundred, at most three hundred delegates will suffice. Let these meet their parliamentary leaders in Dublin, not for one hour's or two hours' scrambling, but for three or four days' calm deliberation. The country will pay the expenses. In this manner, you will have the whole of Ireland taking an active interest in politics; you will have the work of your representatives submitted to the critical judg-

ment of the nation; and you will have a body of trained and educated local representatives whose influence on the popular vote at the recurring elections will be wholesome and salutary."

"You will have something else!" said Father Dillon, who was losing temper rapidly.

"What?" said the doctor.

"The New Atlantis," said the priest.

SESSION TWENTY-THIRD

"CAN it be possible," said Reginald Hunt to Miss Hope, as they walked homewards after the last Session, "that your people are such political incapables as has been just described?"

"You are surprised and disappointed?" she said.

"Yes, both. I have always understood that your people were particularly shrewd and intelligent; and that they were born politicians. Why, look at America! They seem to control every political organisation there; and these must be necessarily much of the same temperament and training as their countrymen at home."

"How many Irishmen in the Senate?" was the reply. "How many Mayors of Cities are Irish? What chance is there that any descendant of an Irish Catholic shall ever be President of America?"

"Then you don't think your people wield the large political power and patronage in the States that we have been led to believe? Why, our good countrymen in England are suffering from chronic nightmare on account of the preponderance of the Irish element in American politics."

She shook her head.

"Parochial politics? Yes. State politics? No! Our people are in a state of pupillage, as the doctor asserted. I was genuinely angry with the doctor; but I could not contradict him."

"What did you think of Miss Fraser's paper?" he asked, suddenly changing the subject.

"I thought it excellent," said Miss Hope. "It is the Herbartian theory slightly modified. But I think it debatable. Don't you?"

"I thought so," he replied. "Will you take up the debate at our next Session?"

"No—o!" she said. "Somehow, I should think it not quite, — well, *comme il faut*. But I may join in."

"Thanks very much! I should like to hear your views on that matter."

"Will you try and bring out Mr. Marshall?" she said. "You are both contending for the laurels; and it would be nice if you brought him to the front. Of course, your portfolio is not exhausted; but it would be graceful, would it not, to give the old man priority?"

The words seemed to plunge Mr. Hunt into a reverie. They had reached her door.

"Yes!" he said. "I shall. It is right because you have wished it; and you have wished it because it is right!"

Hence, in some marvellous manner, at the next Session of the *Sunetoi*, Mr. Marshall had his poem in his breast-pocket; and, by a curious coincidence, Father Dillon demanded it.

"It is rugged," said Mr. Marshall, unfolding his paper. "It is obscure. It is mystical. You will be judges as to whether it is quite unintelligible. You know there are two languages, or dialects almost unintelligible — the prattle of the child and the *balbutium* of the aged; and both because they are so near eternity, and have caught the trick of its silence. Harken!"

THE TEMPLE OF SLEEP

I entered the Temple of Sleep through the gateway of tears,
And no sun was within, and no moon, but a blood-brown twilight;
And lo! There was silence from sobbing,
But a fulness of fruitful fears.

For men were all monsters in motley apparel bedight,
And the face of a child did stare out from the mane of a lion.
Yea, the brow of the king of the fearless
Was a pallid face of affright.

A maiden came swaying and poised with the grace of a Dian,
Her raiment embroidered fell in the sinuous coils of a snake, —
The snake of the bearer, Ophiuchus,
Who flees 'fore the face of Orion.

Their lips parched and parted in sunder their anguish did slake
From goblets half-fulvid with gold, and half-rubied in flame,
And their lips from the twain-chaséd goblet
Their twain-tainted colours did take.

And fear followed fear in the snake-shapes of horror and shame,
But only the eye was sore-smitten; and untouched was the ear;
For silent they passed to the silences
Of the unknown bourn whence they came.

I think 'twas this dumbness that smote me — this speechlessness
drear
As of Centaurs transfixed into stone, or a sand-covered sphinx,
Staring far o'er the limitless desert,
Void of hope, but as tranquil of fear.

I felt as you feel 'fore the face of a monster that thinks,
And reads all your soul with the lamp of a dead, speechless stare;
Or a fate that in silence your dead Past
With a future Nemesis links.

I cried to the silences crowded, in words of despair:
“Ye forms, which swing slow out of nothing, to nothing do pass,
Beaten hither and thither on vampire —
Black wings through the umbered air,

“Who are ye? Whence go ye? Whence come? Are ye ghosts in
the glass
Of fancy, redundant of shapes, madly-formed, motley-hued,
Gigantic 'gainst backgrounds of blackness,
Thunder-bearing, and turbid, and crass?

“Were ye framed in the throes of a Nature, phrenetic and lewd,
Or distorted in madness of mouldings, from some archetype,
From convulsions of Heaven-scaling Titans,
In rage of despair, iron-thewed?

“Or, when the full time for unfolding your species was ripe,
Did some demi-god blunder, apprentice-like, piece after piece,
Evolving from natures melodious
The scream of a rude scrannel-pipe?”

But around, and around me they hovered, without pause or
surcease,
And blent into shapes, ever-varied, amorphous, and blind;
As a sylph might unwind to a blind-worm,
Or a moth to a Psyche increase.

And this made it dreadful — this blending of kind with its kind,
More dreadful the rapid mutation of beauty to hideousness;
Can a Lucius look on Lamia,
Without leaving one qualm behind?

So I traversed the Temple of Sleep with a certain callousness,
As a traveller closes his eyes, and plunges into the night,
Made brave by a frantic dread of despair,
And an unsunned hopelessness.

II

And lo! on horizons afar a faint, crepuscular light,
Trembling and thin like a white-fringed wave on a sandy coast,
When the blind earth is swallowed in darkness,
And feels how terrific its might!

And the great white fans of the dawn fluttered their feathered host,
Spreading the plumage of light far down through the breaking skies.
The golden-hooved horses of Phœbus
Gleamed far on the skyey coast.

And farther and farther rearwards, as legions of light arise,
The curtains of Night were up gathered, grimy fold upon fold,
Furled like the canvas of phantom ships
To ghostly mariners' cries.

And on every plume of the dawn-wings, glist'ning in pearls and gold
Grew the oval face of a sun, whose ridgéd circumference
Was a winged angelic radiance
Like a flaming photosphere rolled.

Backward their faces were flung, and glowed with a light intense,
Hair far-streaming, but netted, and raiment tightened and drawn,
Clothed with heavenly graciousness
And the beauties of lower sense.

And as ever the mighty orb-worlds swung to in the lucent dawn,
Seraphs uncoiled them from suns, and hung in the golden space,
Dashed and sprinkled with pearly light
Like the gems on a dewy lawn.

And then did I see in my vision the pictured angelic Face,
Dreamed by genius and faith in the swift, sweet raptures of
thought, —
The visioned perfection of Heaven,
The prophetic fate of our race.

Eyes, unclosed and adoring, with light from far spaces brought,
Lips half-parted in silence of worship, or spherul song;
And a flame on the forehead triumphant
Like that which Angelico wrought.

Chiselled and clear-cut faces with the outlines firm and strong,
Eyes that gleam in the battle, or sheathe with the film of a dove;
Search the Cimmerian tunnels of Hell,
Or shepherd the starry throng.

Spirit-eyes that are lost in the deserts of tranquil love,
Hands that lean on the hilts of weapons that quiver in flame,
And wings that sweep through Gehennah,
Or winnow the sun-plains above.

And around and around me they whirled, till the flaming suns
became
One mighty river of light, torrential in strength and sound,
Dispersing, uniting, wave upon wave,
Distinct, but ever the same.

But, unlike the silences chained, which the lips of the monsters bound,
The music of wakened suns, as erst of the Sons of Light
Broke on the startled dawn-dreamers,
And shattered the silence profound.

And echoed afar by the spaces revolving in tranquil night,
Returned in reverberations, muffled as heard from afar,
Afar in the misty spaces where sink
Mind-magic and searchings of sight.

I asked, where this sun-river rolled, what omnipotent bar
Controlled its volcanic strength, and flung it back into space;
Or diminished its crested glories from
A sun to a pale-blue Star.

And I felt as if someone had whispered: This vast and colossal
race
Of systems, encircles some splendours afar and as yet unseen —
'Tis the giant parade of shining worlds
Drawn out 'fore the Godhead's Face.

And dark is that Face as yet in the wake of a luminous screen,
Whilst the universe glides in front, marshalled by prophets' rod,
Through the deep, unchannelled eternities,
Through grooves in the ether serene.

How then shall we ever behold It — this Throne of the Hidden
God?
Or unmesh our sinking souls from the swift and painful strife,
The onrushing, impetuous forces,
Reined by the Olympian nod?

But lo! from the centre where ever the thoughts of wisdom are
rife
I heard: Thou must cease to judge, as erst in the blood-brown air,
Conjecture and doubt have passed with death,
And in its deep valleys is Life!

Ah! then, but that Temple of Sleep; and the forms uncouth and
fair?
And the Faces that swung out of darkness, and unto the dark
returned?
They are Dreams, They are Dreams
Of the Death, called Life,
And the Phantoms that hover there!

"You see, ladies and gentlemen," said Mr. Marshall, with a little deprecatory smile, "it is a little obscure and phantasmal. Of course, there is an explanation; but the commentary would be longer than the poem itself."

"It must have cost you great labour?" said Mrs. Holden, sympathetically.

"Ah, my dear Madam —" said Mr. Marshall; and he did not finish the sentence.

"I understand," said Father Dillon, after a little pause, "that the system of education formulated by Miss Fraser at our last meeting is known as the Herbartian. I believe that Herbart was also the originator of a system of philosophy, which is not generally accepted, or acceptable. We have nothing to say to his philosophical principles; but his educational system is open to discussion. Am I right in supposing that it is the Herbartian system you advocate, Miss Fraser?"

"Partly," said the lady. "Just one phase of it, perhaps. I should very much like to obtain the views of the Society, at least as far as I have gone."

"Perhaps, the Professor —?" said Father Dillon.

"On the point which touched my own department," said the Professor, "Miss Fraser and I are in perfect accord. I cannot conceive of a gentlemanly education with the classics left out. I am quite aware that the trend of modern education, absolutely utilitarian, just as the trend of our politics is absolutely socialistic, is directed towards the elimination of the classics, and the substitution of science. It is certainly singular that the classics should be always associated with elegance, refinement, whatever savours of conservatism and gentle birth and breeding; and that science should be connected with ideas of democracy, progress, liberalism, and a general loosening of the bonds on which society has hitherto held together. You cannot even imagine a Greek scholar, or a Ciceronian Latinist a democrat; and, although in the French Revolution, there was a good deal of affectation about Roman names, or Grecian heroes, the Revolutionists were a

pack of vulgar lawyers and scientists, who knew nothing of the spirit of the ancients. The very word "classics" is synonymous with what has been consecrated and placed on the shelf for ever. It means the very opposite of change, or revolution, or the breaking up of things, or the searching out of new ideals. In a word it is conservatism in the fullest and grandest sense — the conservatism of old ideals and customs; and therefore, the proper study for a gentleman —"

"Do you really mean, Professor," said the doctor, interrupting rather brusquely, "that a man who is devoted to science cannot be a gentleman?"

"If you mean, exclusively devoted to science," said the Professor blandly, "I say certainly, Yes! He cannot. The reason is plain. A gentleman is one of refined habits and feelings, sensitive to his own honour and others' comfort, physically unable to do anything coarse or rude. To raise the human mind to that level, ideas, as Miss Fraser so aptly said, are absolutely necessary; and these must be lofty and transcendent ideas, — ideas that lift and raise and elevate above everything sordid, and coarse, and mean. Now, a scientist has to deal not with ideas, but with facts; and facts are vulgar things. He has to deal with stones and minerals and common clay; with offensive and dangerous chemicals; with foul-smelling gases, and all the smut and soot in the laboratories of Nature. He has to vivisect, and examine the palpitating entrails of the lower creation to deduce principles for curing the maladies and general decomposition of the higher. Thus, you see, he is in daily contact with whatever is real, tangible, and humble; and he becomes of necessity realistic in his ideas; and his mind has a tendency to materialise everything. Hence, all the grand ideas and all the superb visions of the poet, the idealist, the classicist, are foreign to him. In science, he is a realist; in philosophy, a materialist; in politics, a socialist; in religion, an atheist. Whereas the classic scholar, who has drunk in all the magnificence and sublimity of the ancients:

“All the glory that was Greece,
All the grandeur that was Rome,’

becomes an idealist in daily life; in politics, a conservative; in philosophy, a subjectivist; in religion, a theist and a Christian.”

“Well, I’m blessed!” said the doctor in a comical manner, that made the *Sunetoi* smile, but seemed to repudiate argument. And the clever Father Dillon, always fearful of an explosion, said hastily:

“Very good, now; very good. The Professor has set the ball rolling. We have now one set of views on Miss Fraser’s paper from the Professor’s standpoint. Of course, there are many others?”

He looked around inquiringly, and he thought he saw a look as of eager debate on Hester Hope’s face.

“Miss Hope, perhaps —?” he said.

And the young lady, looking towards Reginald Hunt in a half-enquiring, half-perplexed manner, said:

“There is only one point in Miss Fraser’s paper which, I think, may be contravened; but virtually, it embraces the whole thesis. I mean that the analogy between the assimilation of food and that of ideas is not quite tenable. In the affair of corporal food, the act of assimilation is purely automatic; but in the acquisition of ideas, there must be necessarily an exercise of mental functions, and hence, a development of them; and thence, what we call education, a word, which Miss Fraser eschewed. Because if an idea, whether conveyed *viva voce*, or through a picture, or through a book, is grasped by the infantine mind, it must instantly call into operation the three great faculties, — memory, will, and understanding, that is, if it does not drop dead from the child-mind. It must occupy the will-function, for even in very young children attention is required to grasp an idea, and attention depends on will-power. It must exercise the understanding; otherwise, it is only a vague, nebulous thing,

or merely a verbal form without a mental equivalent. It demands the use of memory, otherwise it is an evanescent picture, a mere cloud-vapour, that changes and dissolves. All this is quite true even of the most elementary forms of education — even of picture-lessons, or fairy tales, or object-lessons. In every case, it seems to me, that if an idea is to be taken in, and digested, as food is, it must instantly call into action the great faculties of the mind. The same thing is true of what is now known as the heuristic method, or the exercise of the heuristic faculty in the child —”

“You see, doctor,” broke in the Professor, “you cannot get on without the Greek. There is no possible equivalent to that word in our language. I beg a thousand pardons for interrupting you, Miss Hope.”

“I was saying that the same principle holds here,” continued Miss Hope. “The same faculties are ever and always called into requisition, whether you point out to the child-mind the various objects that may interest it; or allow the child to seek those objects of itself. I think, therefore, the Herbartian method adds nothing new to our science of education. It substitutes an involuntary exercise of the mental faculties for a voluntary and professed system. And that is all.”

“At least you must admit, Miss Hope,” said the doctor, “that it is perfectly original and novel in placing lofty ideals before the soul of the child. Of course, I have never seen it tested; but I can easily imagine what the moral training of a child would be, if from its earliest years it was habituated to the contemplation and worship of supreme excellence in others. I think that here our English friends (for whom I have no great love otherwise) —”

Mr. Hunt raised himself gently, bowed, and smiled.

“Have certainly the whip hand of us. The young English lad is taught all the great deeds of daring and fortitude that have been wrought by his countrymen from Alfred downwards. Every great name, made illustrious in politics, in science, in art, in literature, and above all, in war, has been

made familiar to him. He burns to emulate these heroes. 'A grave in Westminster Abbey,' a place in the British Pantheon, is the one great and final ambition of the English boy, who is worth anything. And, although I hate and detest and abominate every act of conquest and aggression, whether committed by Hun or Goth or Frank or Briton, yet I am prepared to admit that even wars of aggression do call forth many manly qualities, such as bravery, endurance of hardships, unselfishness, even the sacrifice of a life for a friend. For example, I think Clive and Hastings were simply freebooters and brigands; but I also think that march of the Cameronian Highlanders to the relief of Lucknow one of the most stirring episodes in history. I don't care much about the British occupation of India; but I think it the most astonishing fact in all human history. And, much as I dislike the ordinary Englishman, I candidly admit he has no equal for discipline and fortitude in an emergency. I don't know anything grander than the conduct of the British mariners and sailors on board that troop-ship that foundered off the Isle of Wight some years ago, when not a man would stir to save himself, until every woman and child on board had been got into the boats. Yes! England has a lot to account for; and if nations could be tried in the valley of Jehosaphat, she would have to take a back seat. But, by Jove, to be just, I must say she has noble traditions, and she does well in keeping them before the eyes of her children."

"Then why not keep the Napoleonic legend before the eyes of young Frenchmen?" said Father Dillon demurely.

"No!" thundered the doctor. "I'll allow no compromise there. The fellow was not a Frenchman. He was a mere Corsican adventurer and filibusterer. He had not one particle of chivalry in his nature. He was a mathematical prodigy, a scientific butcher. He never did anything great, or generous, or noble. He was a coward at heart. He fainted in the National Assembly, and had to be taken out insensible. When he attempted to strike Admiral Villeneuve after Nelson's

victory over the French fleet, and the Admiral drew his sword, the little great man collapsed. There was one characteristic incident in his life. I think it was just at the very close of the Battle of Wagram, or Jena. His cuirassiers, three thousand strong, were passing by at full gallop in a final charge. They cheered, of course. He didn't mind. His thoughts were of butchery always. He made a gesture with his hand, which meant: Stab! Stab! Stab! and then he turned away. It was the blood of the Corsican brigand that spoke."

"No matter!" said Father Dillon. "But, as I have said, the legend will never die. France will be swallowed up in an earthquake before Napoleon is forgotten. And then Europe will cherish his memory."

"Of course! of course!" said the doctor, with a disdainful gesture. "The ape and the tiger again! My dear sir, if you were to introduce a prize-fighter, a bruiser into a Chicago theatre, and a St. Francis into a Chicago church, which would command the larger audience?"

"The world is not quite so degenerate, doctor," said Miss Hope. "You'll find there is always some latent admiration for real greatness, although it may not express itself well."

"I don't know," replied the doctor. "I cannot see it. The greatest men, the greatest benefactors of the race are nowhere compared with a tyrant. Carlyle is right. It is only brute strength that's worshipped. Who ever heard of such men as Sir Thomas More singled out for the admiration of young boys or young men?"

"Well, we worship Bruce and Wallace, and Montrose in Scotland," said Miss Fraser, with a smile.

"And don't you remember, doctor," said Miss Hope, "that pretty little episode at Charles Lamb's house in London, when the best intellects of that age were discussing what honour they would pay the illustrious dead?"

"I don't remember. I never heard," said the doctor, indifferently.

"And Charles Lamb said: If Shakspeare were just now to enter this room, we would all stand up. But if Another, whom we shall not name, were to enter, we should all kneel down."

"I don't remember. I have never heard," murmured the doctor. "Ah! These were the *Sunetoi* of their day."

As they strolled down along the street, Bob Skelton said brusquely:

"Why are you so hard upon that poor Boney, Doc? Sure he's dead, isn't he?"

"Because he murdered 5,000 prisoners in cold blood in Palestine," said the doctor.

"Ah, now! And did he do that?" said Mr. Skelton.

"Because he filled France with weeping widows and orphans," said the doctor.

"Oh, well, of course, yes! But you know these are the chances of war," said the banker.

"And he murdered that young Duke without a trial," said the doctor.

"Ah, well, — but, you must know — 'twas diplomatic; and then the young fellow wanted to upset him, you know!"

"And he plundered all Italy; and brought to Paris all the grandest and finest works of ancient and modern art, stolen from gallery and museum without scruple."

"Ah, well, but, you know, my dear Doc — these are the spoils of war — *spolia opima*, isn't that the word? My Latin is rusty. I must give the Professor a commission to rub me up in the classics!"

"Then he divorced Josephine, and broke her heart!" said the doctor.

"Incompatibility of temper, I suppose!" said Robert coolly. "After all, wasn't it better, when they couldn't get along? And I'm sure, he wasn't a bad husband."

"And he robbed a bank in Austria, and —"

"Robbed a bank?" said Robert. "Oh, the ruffian! Hanging was too good for him!"

SESSION TWENTY-FOURTH

"SPEAKING of Ideals," said Father Dillon, at the next meeting, using his privilege as Chairman to open the debate, "is it not characteristic of our age, and somewhat saddening, that the terrible realism of our novelists gives no chance to the young to see, and understand, what heroism is? I quite agree with Miss Fraser, and — and the doctor," he said, somewhat hesitatingly, "that it is absolutely necessary to place grand ideals of virtue and goodness before the minds of children. Hence it is that our Church is never tired of asking her children to study the Lives of her Saints, in order that they may be tempted to follow such lives even in a far-off and imperfect manner. But, considering the enormous importance of the modern novel as a factor in human enlightenment and progress, I think it is deplorable that our writers seem to have put aside all the old chivalrous models, and given us only the squalid side of humanity in their little 'slices of life.'"

"You would go back then to the romantic school," said Reginald Hunt, — "back to Walter Scott and mediævalism and the tournament, and chivalry, and all that?"

"Certainly," said Father Dillon. "I think it deplorable that Walter Scott is no longer read. Such a gallery of noble pictures should not be locked up from mankind."

"But it is not locked up," said Mr. Hunt. "It is wide open; but no one will go in!"

"I think this is a sign and a result of our advanced education," said Miss Hope, timidly. "I do not say whether it is better or worse for humanity that the old spirit of romanticism should have died out. But the advanced critical spirit of the age, questioning all things, and demanding facts, will not brook any longer the dream-pictures of such romanticists as Scott."

"But then," said Father Dillon, "is it quite impossible to give us pictures from real life without revolting details? Admitting, for the sake of argument, that the world, taught scientifically, will not care much for vapour-pictures or ideals, are there no great elements in human nature that can be brought forward and set before the gaze of our young people to make them lift up their eyes and aspire?"

"No!" said Mr. Hunt. "And for this reason. The age is analytical. It seeks only common elements. It does not wait to know what you may, or can form by combination from these elements. It does not see *cumuli*, or *cirrhi*, but only vapour. It does not see suns or nebulae; but only gases in a state of transition from form to form. In society, it strips kings and paladins of their trappings, and shows them in their naked deformity. And it strips humanity of all its glory and dignity, and shows us only the skeleton or the crumbling frame in one shape or other of decomposition and disease."

"But," said Father Dillon, "admitting all that, admitting that our writers of fiction cannot any longer soar amongst archangels, why should they go down into the mud and slime to seek their pictures? Is it necessary to drag up from all the deeps of human infamy types of humanity to reveal them in all their grossness to the world? Are there no types between the archangel and the beast?"

"There may be," said Mr. Hunt. "But these are not picturesque in themselves. They are only drab-coloured mediocrities, without the interest that extremes always possess. It is the heroic we want — I mean the public want. And the hero may be Satan or Michael; but it won't have a 'faithful Abdiel.'"

"I thought the Russian school had redeemed all that," said Miss Fraser. "I know the French school has revelled in naughtiness; but I thought the Russian novelists, eager to raise their fellow-countrymen, had put before them magnificent ideals."

Mr. Hunt shook his head.

"I fear not," he said. "Quite the other way. But it was not their fault. They wrote with a purpose; and that purpose was reformation. They woke up from the sleep of ages — those young giants, and saw the abysses and those who wallowed therein. They had to cry to their fellow-sleepers, Awake! and this could not be done without clangour and tumult. And then when the giant nation began to rouse itself, and rub its eyes, and turn around its hideous bulk, it was necessary to show where, and in what awful depths it had been drawing out its fetid existence. Hence Gogol in his *Dead Souls*, Tolstoi in all his dread novels, Poushkin, and even Tourgenieff had to draw in real and terrible colours the things they saw and heard; and then hold the lurid picture before the eyes of their fellow-countrymen, and say, Look! That is you!"

"And probably they were well hated for their trouble," said the doctor.

"Of course. That goes without saying. They were hated by the powers for stirring up the people to possible rebellion. They were hated by the people for disturbing their ignoble lethargy. From the former they got the prison; and barely escaped Siberia. From the latter they got the brand of treason, because they had the courage to tell their countrymen the truth."

"But to come back to the original question," said Father Dillon, "I want to know why these writers, instead of holding up lofty ideals and patterns of patriotism before the eyes of the people, as Miss Fraser and the doctor suggest, should have preferred to place before the eyes of their countrymen pictures of degradation and uncomeliness?"

"There are two excellent reasons for this," said Mr. Hunt. "They had no grand ideals to exhibit, if you mean by ideals great models of excellence and heroism; and if they had such, their countrymen would not understand or appreciate them. You have never heard of a Russian Hofer, or a Russian Kos-

ciousko. The Russian heroes have been of a less celebrated type. They have been the thousands, and tens of thousands, that, unknown and unrecognised, passed into Siberia, and there hid in unknown and dishonoured graves. But these are not dramatic enough for the multitude. They do not stir the blood in human hearts or bring a film to the eye. But, even if the Russians had such heroes as are sung and celebrated in other countries, they would not understand. There are times when a nation sinks so low either under the trampling hoof of tyranny, or under the dead weight of materialism, that it is unable to see anything but the mud and slime, into which it is driven. When it sinks thus low, it is quite useless to seek to raise it. If generous hands are stretched towards it, it turns around and bites them."

"True," said the doctor meaningly. "I guess we ourselves are near enough to the slime and the gutter just now."

Father Dillon looked angrily towards him; but said nothing. It was needful, above all things, to maintain the equilibrium of the Society.

"You may remember," went on Mr. Hunt in his languid manner, "that scene in 'Virgin Soil,' when Neshdanof full of a passionate desire to raise up the peasantry, broke away from the steady counsels of Solomine, and mounting his telega, got in amongst the peasants, and began to harangue them on their rights, and liberty, and so forth?"

The question appeared to be addressed to Father Dillon, who was the interrogator; but in reality, it took in the whole assembly.

The young priest looked embarrassed; but Miss Fraser at once came to his relief.

"No! we haven't read it. Please tell us."

"Well, you must read the story for yourselves," said Reginald Hunt, "but that episode may be briefly summarised. Neshdanof was a young enthusiast; and, like all young enthusiasts, he was impatient of advice. Solomine, his equal in patriotism, would restrain him; but he would not be

restrained. He broke away, drove a considerable distance to preach, and scatter seditious leaflets; got in amongst a crowd in a village, stood up in his telega, and shouted: 'Brothers!' They stared at him, as if he were insane; but one burly fellow, a blacksmith, seized him, dragged him into a public house, and forced a measure of *vodhka* down his throat. It nearly suffocated him; but they had no pity and only shouted 'Drink!' He tried to make a furious speech, but they only shouted 'Drink!' Then, as Tourgenieff says: 'Red noses flew towards him; dusty heads of hair; sun-burned necks, throats furrowed and scarred. Hairy hands took hold of him.' 'Come, finish your speech!' shouted wild voices. 'Come speak! Day before yesterday, a stranger like you told us lots of things. Go on! you four-legged son of a sea-cook!' But the young dreamer was now too drunk to stand, or speak. They hustled his insensible form into his telega; and his servant, Paul, drove him away from their shouts and jeering laughter. Another patriot, Markelop, pursuing the same mission of elevating and arousing the peasantry, was promptly seized by the latter, hustled around, had his coat torn in shreds, his face and eyes battered beyond recognition; then they tied his hands, and delivered him to the Governor. His fate was Siberia. Neshdanof's was suicide!"

He paused. Then said:

"What room for great ideals there? No! You cannot blame the writers that tell such things of their countrymen. They are Reformers first; and must paint the evils, and get them acknowledged, before the people can realise the necessity of correcting them."

"I don't know — I cannot agree with you," said Father Dillon. "I have always heard that men are attracted by the positive; repelled by the negative; that they are more touched by representations of nobleness and virtue, than repelled by presentments of vice and squalor. Hence, I still hold, with Miss Fraser, that the right way to educate a people is to

keep always before their eyes great things. They will easily learn their own degradation by the comparison."

"No!" said Mr. Hunt. "I regret that I must disagree with you profoundly. A race, or a nation, habituated to serfdom, and all the lamentable consequences serfdom brings with it in its train, — duplicity, cunning, selfishness, equivocation, lying, — will simply look at your fine ideals with incredulity, and turn aside. They will dub you a dreamer, an enthusiast, who must exaggerate for Art's sake, and no more. They say: He is a dreamer; let him pass! Or, supposing that, here and there, some young, generous soul is startled into a strange trance of lofty and self-sacrificing sentiment, one of two things must occur. Either that young soul goes forward to martyrdom; or else keeps its new-born fancies under control, and feeds on them in secret, or in secret communicates them to kindred minds."

"Well, and would not that be a gain?" said Father Dillon.

"Certainly. And probably it would be worth the experiment. But such souls that can escape the contamination of the *esprits ergoteux* are few and far between; and the propaganda of such esoteric doctrines must be necessarily limited."

"Even so," persisted Father Dillon. "Why, if only one convert were made in a generation, would it not be a gain?"

"Of course. But Miss Fraser was speaking, I presume, of general education. There, idealism is a failure."

"But," said Miss Hope, "you must remember, Mr. Hunt, that Miss Fraser was speaking of the education of the young. Do you not think that grand heroic ideals would make a lasting impression on such plastic minds?"

"Certainly, — on the very young, the children. I am quite with Miss Fraser there. But, Father Dillon was speaking of high ideals in literature, especially in the novel; and I was just reasoning that our generation, for reasons which I specified, do not want these high ideals."

"Then they should be forced to accept them," said Miss Hope. "A novelist is a teacher —"

"I beg pardon. Some novelists say no! They disclaim all pretensions of that kind. They say, we are but showmen, *entrepreneurs* for the amusement of the public. We, therefore, consult the public tastes. If the public want a Brutus or a Coriolanus, we give it the Brutus or Coriolanus. If the public demand a Tarquin, lo! here is Tarquin! It is nothing to us. We give what is required, and nothing else. Now, if the taste of a nation is depraved, or is averse to lofty representations, the showmen must accommodate themselves to that taste, or —fail!"

"But, if I should deny," said Miss Hope, "that writers are mere showmen; if I should say they are of necessity teachers of the multitude, what answer would they give?"

"Probably, they would shrug their shoulders, and say they decline the honour of being prophets to a stiff-necked generation, which refused to hear them, and believe."

"But I would say No! Men are not so indifferent; and supply creates demand. Give the world old chivalrous ideals again — Knights of the Round Table, brave Sir Galahads, who 'reverence their conscience as their King;' and men will worship as of old."

"Alas!" said the incredulous Mr. Hunt. "I fear they would prefer a Gawain or a Sir Lancelot. But, let us see! You Catholics have all the chivalry of the world enshrined in your Saints' Lives. I presume, of course, that these lives are the daily bread of your multitudes."

Miss Hope turned away, half in anger, half in sorrow. No one else ventured to reply.

"Ah!" he said. "I fear somehow that saints and knights rebuke us for our inferiority, and are therefore unpopular. The lower elements of life flatter us with a sense of our superiority. That accounts for the popularity of the realistic novel. Besides, although saints and knights are for the most part dead, and hence beyond our envy, they become disagreeable if we are expected to imitate them."

"Yes," said Father Dillon, "our saints are a constant rebuke

to our sloth and spiritual mediocrity. Their lives are unpleasant reading. They prick us with remorse and despair."

"That is, if you accept your position," said the doctor, "and have not the courage to imitate them."

"Quite so," said the priest, rather curtly.

"And for the same reason," added the doctor, maliciously, "it would be idle to speak of patriotism now, when we have become a nation of jobbers."

But Father Dillon was consulting Mrs. Holden about her programme, and seemed not to heed. The party broke up into groups of two and threes, whilst Mrs. Holden was sorting her music; and Hester Hope took occasion to say to Mr. Hunt:

"If all this is true, then fiction has failed; and where are we to seek our ideals?"

"In art," he said at once. "In music, and painting, and poetry. Not such music as that," he continued, nodding towards the piano. "That is purely imitative and artificial — the music of a mechanical toy, or a gramophone. These people must have the mind of the master who composed it. That is the reason why all instrumental music falls so flat on the ears that the audience try to stifle it by conversation. It is really as absurd to try and play a great piece of music as to try to reproduce a great picture."

"You'll drive us all to despair," she said. And somehow, the music that evening, although Mrs. Holden's execution was perfect, seemed to pall upon her. Critics destroy many of the illusions, and along with them, many of the pleasures of life.

SESSION TWENTY-FIFTH

FATHER DILLON called at the house of meeting, which was the doctor's, or rather Mrs. Holden's, about half an hour before the next Session commenced. He bade the little servant, Beatrice, to show him into the doctor's study; and to tell the doctor he wished to see him there. The doctor was not long in obeying the call. He came in smoking, and said cheerily:

"Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"No!" said Father Dillon, looking very uneasy, "but do you know I fear we shall quarrel."

"Quarrel? Who?" said the doctor, looking at the pale face in amazement.

"Why, — you and I. Now this would be disastrous, because, though we might heal it up in private, we could never bring our Society together again."

The Doctor puffed violently at his cigar for a few moments; and at last he said:

"Sit down!"

The priest sat down.

"Now, what is it all about?"

"About your sarcastic and violent remarks on political subjects," said Father Dillon, who was very pale and nervous. "Now, I don't object to any man holding his own opinion; but it is painful for an Irishman in mixed company to have to listen to one long tirade against his country. I wouldn't mind if we were alone; but in the presence of Englishmen —"

"I know," said the doctor, brightening up. He evidently feared something more serious. "But, my dear Father Dillon, you will please remember that it was you who drew up the programme, and not I. And, you said that politics, and even religion, might be discussed."

"That is quite true," said the young priest. "But, I don't think it is right for us to expose our weaknesses so conspicuously to strangers."

"Then you admit there are weaknesses," said the doctor. "I'm glad to hear that you agree with me that our political condition just now is not so rose-coloured as our professional statesmen represent."

"No, I don't agree with you at all," said the priest. "There will be always room for improvement, of course; but that is no reason why there should be such carping and criticising of public men."

"I see. You think that a Member of Parliament is such a sacred personage that his words and acts must never be challenged. Is that it?"

"No. But I think that when our country has delegated to its representatives the difficult task of fighting for its liberties, it is unfair to hamper them in the very thick of the fight by gratuitous and offensive censures on their acts."

"Then, you think that our politicians will be seriously embarrassed by a few remarks made in a private drawing-room in Queenstown. This is telepathy with a vengeance."

"No!" said the priest. "But I think these remarks may get abroad; and lead the public into discontent with the present political situation."

"You don't fear anything of the kind, my dear Father," said the doctor brusquely. "If I cared I could communicate my ideas to the Press, although that, too, is muzzled. But I prefer to leave your friends an open road to perdition; and plenty of rope to hang themselves with. Because, remember, that you may deceive the people today, and to-morrow, and the next day; but you can't deceive the people for ever. But, that's not the point —"

"No, of course," said Father Dillon. "The point is, that you are hopelessly wrong; and it is hard for one to listen to you patiently."

"If you mean that I am the deadly foe of absolutism in

every shape and form, from the autocracy of the Czar down to the furious fanaticism of the village politician, who is prepared to smash the head of any man who disagrees with him, you are right. I stand for perfect freedom of opinion in all civil and political matters. But — do you really mean that no one is permitted to differ from you at our meetings? Did you not lay down the rule, that the utmost toleration should be observed by the members in every discussion; and the widest latitude of opinion allowed? I judge you by your own words.”

“Most certainly,” said Father Dillon. “But, you see, I am an Irish priest; and I am extremely sensitive about everything that can reflect discredit on our country before strangers —”

“Then you should have excluded political questions from our programme. However, if you like, I shall resign —”

“Oh, no, no!” said the priest. “That would never do. That would mean the disruption of our whole society.”

“Well, then submit an amendment to the meeting, that politics shall be excluded from our society in future —”

“That would be worse. It would lead to inquiry as to why and wherefore; and that would be unpleasant, and may tend to dissolve our pleasant little gatherings. If you, my dear doctor, would only — would only —”

“Hold my tongue? Never, if I feel called upon to speak! I would utter my opinions in the ear of Ireland tomorrow, if I thought I would get a fair chance of being listened to. But here is our dread dilemma — A man is instantly called ‘a fanatic,’ ‘a disturber,’ if he tells the truth; if he keeps silent, he is called ‘a coward.’ But I’m not going to draw down upon me the ungrammatical buffoonery of every idler in Ireland, who is eaten up with vanity. I will spare the public my opinions; but, I reserve the right of expressing these opinions if demanded.”

“Then, you have no scruple in lowering our unhappy country in the eyes of strangers?”

"Not the slightest, if I keep within the bounds of truth. You underrate the intelligence of these gentlemen. They know right well, and you might have conjectured as much from their conversation, that our faults are not only the faults of every country that is emerging from slavery, but of the entire modern world. We Irish are awful fools. We are constantly posing before the mirror of our own vanity; and then imagining that the outside world is as interested in our ugliness or our comeliness as we ourselves. Why, our problems are world-problems. Our politicians are much of the same kidney as politicians everywhere, and at all times. For example, did you ever hear of René Bazin?"

"Of course. He wrote 'The Nun.'"

"Well, he wrote a good deal besides. Did you ever hear of his book '*La terre qui meurt*'?"

"No. What is it?"

"Why, 'The Land that is dying'— the desertion of the land by the people, and their tendency to flock into cities. We thought that the decay of agriculture was our problem. It is a world-problem. It is the problem of France, Great Britain, America. And, are you aware that Ireland is hardly even a geographical name on the continent?"

"I've heard so!" said the priest, humbly.

"Perhaps you also think that the English people are concerned about us; and that our politicians make the hearts of Englishmen tremble, and the roofs of Westminster shake?"

"You're sarcastic. But there can be no doubt that our Members are able to demand, and enforce, the attention of the House of Commons, when they will."

"Blessed are the innocent!" said the doctor. "Then you don't know that the rising of an Irish Member is the signal for a general stampede to the library, to the tea-room, to the terrace. You have never read in Lord Beaconsfield's letters, that England thinks no more of Ireland than of 'St. Kitts,' and that — Come here!"

The doctor had gone over and raised the window-blinds. The full moon shone across the channel, dimming the electric lights on Haulbowline and Fort Westmoreland; but the red intermittent flash from the lighthouse at Roche's Point was clearly visible.

"Do you see that light? You know it means the harbour's mouth, through which the life-blood of Ireland is slowly welling. Let me tell you a political secret. Every English statesman, Whig or Tory, Liberal or Conservative, legislates for Ireland with his eye on that harbour mouth."

"You mean —?"

"Yes, I mean that the lingering hope of every English statesman is the depletion, the depopulation of Ireland, and the extinction of the race. And these are the men with whom your friends are allied. But come upstairs! I guess they are waiting for us. You needn't be afraid that an amateurish discussion in a drawing-room will very much incommode your political friends."

The evening's programme was being carried out.

"We are agreed, I think," said Miss Hester Hope, reading slowly from a very dainty manuscript, "that high ideals are not to be found in the modern novel; and this because of their realism. This suggests the question, whether these ideals are to be discovered in concrete and actual things, or only in the abstract and imaginative creations. Of course, we might have recourse to history for concrete instances of heroism and self-sacrifice, and find there records of individuals whose personal characters and lofty careers almost surpass anything that we could dream of. I doubt, for example, if any poet, epic or other, could fashion out of the threads of his own fancy, such a noble being as Joan of Arc. Our greatest dramatist, we know, failed most miserably in his portrayal, — not, I believe, through racial or political hatred, although he has been accused of this; but only because that simple and sublime maid was beyond the reach even of his magnificent powers, just as she was utterly unintelligible to

her own countryman, Voltaire. But, it must be said, that this, probably, is a solitary instance; and that Joan stands out from the background of history a figure of light, of purity, of heroism, and inspiration which the most daring imagination could not conceive, nor the most plastic hand strike into being in marble or canvas or parchment. History is not prolific of such types. The real, for the most part, is the commonplace. We seek the heroic in imagination alone. But, it may be said that, in material Nature, the real is always far beyond its presentments. No painter, not even Turner, has ever caught on his palette the colours of the dawn or sunset; the light that is upon the sea; the frowning majesty of Alpine pinnacles; the glories of an autumnal forest. Here, at least, the Actual is more than the Ideal. Nature is inimitable and triumphant. It is difficult to deny this fact. Yet it may be controverted. It may be argued, for example, that Art is eternal; whilst the aspects of Nature are fleeting; and that you may keep in your portfolio the symbols and expressions of perfect beauty, whilst Nature is shedding her evanescent splendours, even though she is prodigal in their creation. Again, in poetry, it would be difficult to say whether the apple should be given to Nature, or to her poets and interpreters. Who, for example, would say, that Wordsworth's description of the storm in the second Book of 'The Excursion' is not a greater thing than the pompous panorama which he witnessed up there on the Cumberland hills? Or, who would say, that Shelley's description of the combat between the eagle and the serpent in the first Canto of the *Revolt of Islam* did not surpass the actual aerial duel which probably he witnessed on Alpine or Apennine heights? I am quite sure, if I had seen Sir Bedivere clanking over the rocks with the wounded king on his shoulders, and the mournful barque, with the weeping queens awaiting him; or if I had heard the last tone of sadness, when 'on the mere the wailing died away,' I would not be more deeply impressed than by the mental picture, painted on the retina of the brain by such word-magic. So, too, if

I have said that even a Turner could never catch certain aspects of the sky at dawn or sundown, which is perfectly true, for we have all seen dawns and sunsets that were impossible to brush or pen or pencil; nevertheless, it may be said that Turner has given pictures which Nature never gave; one of the few cases where the great mother has been defeated by her own child. I once saw a water-colour sketch of a horrible, dark, mountain ravine, its rocks black as cobalt, its frowning sides threatening to fall and carry universal destruction with them, an atmosphere dark as midnight; but through an opening, rugged and serrated, there were glimpses of a sunlit valley, clothed with vegetation, of vast sunny lakes, where aerial castles looked down upon their shadows beneath; of far-away, faintly-pencilled mountains that seemed to melt into the cloud-shadows above them; and I doubt if Nature, even in the hollow recesses of her favourite Himalayas, has ever devised and created such splendour of colour, such bold and insolent daring of invention, such imminence of horror, such far-off perspectives of tranquil beauty, as I saw in that little picture, that was selling for half-a-crown. But I think it is most of all in music that we may seek our highest ideals, and beat Nature hollow. Here, she has no chance with art. Murmurs of waterfalls and running brooks, songs of skylarks and nightingales, thunders of shaken forests or avalanches, are nowhere in comparison with the divine music that was struck as if by a plectrum from the souls of Mozart or Beethoven. Hence, I conclude that if we seek high things, lofty ideals and spiritual creations that speak to us of worlds beyond sense and time, art alone can furnish them. And here, unlike fiction, we demand what is noble and dignified, rather than what is actual and commonplace. The artist must rise above the level of daily things; and, consciously or unconsciously inspired, must soar into regions where the sense can only follow by a kind of faith that such things, if not actual, are at least possible; and, therefore, not beyond the compass of composite beings, such as we are,

although they may seem to be the property of spirits, and to exist only in the limitless regions of eternity."

"I have not," said Miss Hope modestly, "developed these ideas as they should be developed; I have but advanced certain theses as texts for further discussion. How far the inspiration of artists is spontaneous and original, or merely the result of education and the force of circumstances; how far the divine intoxication that drew Paolo and Francesca on the brown air of Hell, or that extracted a Moses from marble, or constructed from a scale of eight notes the raptures of a *Chaconne* by Handel, or a *Rondo* by Czerny may be interesting questions for future debate. But, I would wish you to remember that my main thesis is, that, considering the barrenness of modern fiction in high ideals, we must seek these in the kindred arts of poetry and painting and music; in poetry and painting for elevating and ennobling ideas, as well as living presentments of them; and in music for those raptures that are inexpressible save in their own language, and which, in turn, are the creators of emotions that seem not to belong to our nature, and aspirations after a world of Beauty and Truth, that we should deem unrealisable, but that its language has floated down to us from some far spaces, where perhaps more intellectual, or more spiritual beings than we find it the daily expression of their wants and desires."

After a pause, Mr. Hunt said:

"As we are not at liberty to discuss this interesting paper tonight, may I make a suggestion? It is that at our next meeting each member shall bring a poem, a picture, or a piece of music, original or selected, that will embody the individual's idea of what are the loftiest suggestions in these respective arts? Of course, the selection must be limited. I do not propose an exhibition; but only that each member may present something that will typify to himself or herself the most exalted conceptions, the most inspiring thoughts. For example, Mr. Marshall will bring us a poem — Shall I not say, original?"

"Yes, yes!" murmured the *Sunetoi*; "original, and nothing else."

And Mr. Marshall bowed and blushed.

"Then," continued Mr. Hunt, "Miss Fraser will bring us, from her well-stocked portfolio, a sketch in water or oils. Mrs. Holden will bring us an improvisation —"

"Oh, no, no, really I could not," said Mrs. Holden, in evident distress.

"Well, then, your favourite piece; for I'm sure that will embody all that we have been saying of suggestiveness in music."

Mrs. Holden looked anxious, but bowed assent.

"The Professor will bring us a Greek Ode," said Mr. Hunt.

"Out of the question," said the Professor. "I couldn't find time. I'm very busy. Besides, as you know, not a man in a million nowadays could write a Greek Ode."

"Well, then, let us say your translation of your favourite Greek passage?"

"All right," said the Professor.

"The doctor," said Mr. Hunt, inquiringly. "What will the doctor bring?"

"His favourite set of bones," said Bob Skelton.

"And Mr. Skelton himself?" said Mr. Hunt.

"Never mind me!" said the manager. "I'll bring you my Ideal, as you call it."

"And our respected Chairman," said Mr. Hunt, concluding, "will bring us his favourite sermon."

"Oh, for God's sake, no! Don't ask him!" shouted Bob Skelton. "We have to stand that for three-quarters of an hour every Sunday, sometimes fasting —"

"For shame, Robert," said his spouse, "and you know that Father Dillon preaches so nicely we are all disappointed when he is away."

But Robert shrugged his shoulders. He always measured the excellence of a sermon by his watch; and when it went beyond the quarter-hour, Robert shuffled uneasily, and whispered failure.

SESSION TWENTY-SIXTH

THERE was some little trepidation at the next meeting of the *Sunetoi*. The experiment was an unusual one; and some of the members were not too thankful to Mr. Hunt for having proposed it.

"Why not let well alone?" they whispered to themselves. "We were doing well enough; and here come these transcendent theories about Ideals and other things which you cannot grasp, but only guess at in a stupid kind of way. What am I to do? I'm sure I don't know."

Mr. Marshall was the exception. He was always delighted, happy man, at being called upon to contribute to the pleasure or profit of others. And he exulted, positively exulted, in the composition of a poem. And the harder it seemed to evolve from his inner consciousness, the more his enthusiasm grew, until at last the reluctant Muses had to smile on him.

"Now, let me see," he said, as he took up his pen, after having donned his dressing-gown and slippers for perfect physical comfort. "Ideals? Yes! High ideals? Yes! Now, what is the highest ideal of life? Let me see. Why, of course, serenity, god-like tranquillity, looking down on the flux and flow of terrestrial things with undisturbed calm, seeing all transitory things through the aspects of eternity. That, of course, should be the ambition of every mortal — to keep his feelings, sensations, passions in a perfect equipoise, not swerving under every gale of passion, or bending under the zephyrs of love —"

Mr. Marshall paused here. Once or twice he had come under the influence of the divine insanity, and he knew what it meant. But, he went on in his soliloquy —

"But keeping always the absolute equilibrium that we may

suppose exists on Olympian heights; although echoes of Olympian laughter sometimes reach us."

He bit his pen handle and wrote:

Fate, wouldst thou give me one great boon at last?
I do not ask for large ancestral rights; —
The mouldering harvest of a hundred fights,
Or palsied presents from a bloodless past.
That which I imprecate thou ever hast
Locked from pursuers of the low delights,
But flung to watchers of the sleepless nights, —
The elect, the apart, as thou hast wisely classed.

Ere yet my faculties and senses droop
Beneath the burden of the later years,
Make me, although to human eyes unseen,
One of the separate, and timeless group,
Who walk with tranquil eye, unfilmed of fears,
The cold, cloud-summits of the empyrean!

He read it over many times; then he called his favourite cat, Hypatia, supposed to be of Egyptian origin. He stroked down her thick fur, and she purred softly, looking at him with half-closed eyes. This threw him back into prehistoric times, and he thought of Kheops, Khephren, and Mykerinos, resting in their chairs of porphyry or rose-granite, whilst the long parallel lines of succeeding kings stretched in the dim aisles of Theban temples, facing each other in the twilight, their hands resting on their knees, and their faces moulded into an expression of eternal and unbroken serenity. He contemplated the mind-picture for some time. Then, gently laying Hypatia on the hearth-rug, he took his pen again and wrote:

One gift, one attribute of gods I claimed,
And sought by high endeavourings to reach,
And stretched vain hands suppliant to beseech. —
Serenity, the unhuman gift is named —

I know not whether we, as mortals framed,
Must learn the lessons passions ever teach,
Or, be content to wrap in human speech
The word, but not the gift, the gods have claimed.

If this be so, is there no subtle charm
For passion? Of defeated gods no cry
Despairful, as they plunged the abysmal deep?
Forth from their whirring wings in swift alarm
Broke the envenomed warning, and — the lie,
“Eternal calm would be eternal sleep!”

“By Jove,” thought Mr. Marshall, “I shall set the *Sunetoi* by the ears. All other debates shall sink into insignificance if I propose a discussion on that line:

“*Eternal calm shall be eternal sleep.*”

He was merciful, however, when the time came; or, rather, the other papers and pictures drove the thought from his mind.

Miss Fraser submitted at the outset a water-colour sketch. This she hastily withdrew, after Mr. Marshall had read his introductory poems; and she substituted a double engraving, the lines of which were drawn out with remarkable vividness. It was framed in the form of an album. The first scene was of a world, plunged in the horrors of a frightful cataclysm, earthquakes and tidal waves sweeping over its surface; temples and palaces toppling over in fearful ruin; storms breaking over its mountains; and, carried along in the hurricane which was split with lightning, were two angelic forms, with swords of flame dripping blood over the doomed and agonised earth. The second represented a monk's cell — the wretched pallet, the still more wretched coverlet, the emaciated form, the crucifix; and an angel standing on either side of the couch, swords sheathed, and their faces calmly watching the agonies of the dying man.

“What is it? What does it represent?” was the question

asked on every side, as the engravings were passed on from hand to hand.

"That is the intellectual problem which is to interest us," said Miss Fraser modestly. "Let me say these are only copies from first-proofs taken from an ancient diptych in one of the ancestral homes of my native land."

"It is really good," said Mr. Hunt. "It meets the requirements laid down at our last meeting; for it evidently conceals, or half reveals some lofty lesson, or ideal, which it will be the interesting duty of our Society to fully develop. But it needs study. It is cryptic, as many of our old paintings and poems are. Miss Fraser, may I ask you to leave the engraving for inspection on the chiffonier, or on this bracket?"

"Certainly," she said.

"Now, Professor!"

"I know nothing more sublime in ancient poetry," said the Professor, "and nothing so pathetic, so heroic, and therefore so strongly appealing to imagination and sympathy, as the speech of Prometheus in Æschylus. This is the loosest paraphrase expressing what I should think would be in the mind of this Proto-Martyr of Humanity, rather than an exact reproduction of the original.

PROMETHEUS

Why dost thou tarry, O long-lingering Dawn?
How tardily, and with what sluggish ease
Night gathereth in long sweeps her ling'ring train,
Sown with the pearls of the sad-eyed stars!
Sleepless I watched them, as they stared at me,
Until their pity pained me, and I drew
The curtain of my lids across their eyes
And found in utter darkness my relief.
Oh! Phœbus, lash thy leaden-hoovéd steeds
Till they do leap the crest of yonder hill,
And trample the keen lances of the frost,
That stab me in my utter nakedness.

Yet, verily, Night's hands are merciful,
That cloak me in my shame and nakedness,
And I shall pray a shelter from thy beams,
O Phœbus! when thy chariot wheels shall burn
Into a blinding light the molten sky.
Oh, boundless Night! Oh, quivering Stars, behold!
Oh, laughing streams, and dimpled Ocean's smiles!
Oh, all ye powers of earth, and air, and sky,
And thou, O God of Day, slow travailing,
Thy tresses shedding the last, lingering drops
From thy salt seabath through the saffron sky,
What have I done? I, too, a God farseeing,
Crippled by gods on this wild, mountain waste,
Witness the slow procession of the skies,
But pine in vain for glimpse of warm earth,
Or heaving sea, or the sad light that wakes
In the deep wells of human, pitying eyes.
What have I done? I, too, Olympian,
Made impotent by the rude bar that holds
Its tyranny across my aching heart,
And these two iron leeches that absorb
My blood, and bite the flesh of aching feet.
Strength, hast thou said it? Force, hast thou revealed
The anger of Omnipotence, and the wrath
Of the Immortals, because Immortal, I
Have filched from out the Treasury of Heaven
One boon for weak and perishable men?
But hark! that sound that steals upon my ears
Afar, yet nearing, and again afar,
A murmur, and a music, and a mystery,
Like moaning waters 'neath a moonless sky,
Or low sad thunder of the waves by night.
Ha! Not abandoned! Solitude of Kings,
And silence of lone gods no longer mine.
Therefore, O Father of the Eternal Gods,
Thee I defy; for lo! along the waves,
Breasting their savage and tumultuous wrath,
Swifter and stronger than Cytherean pards,
The nymphs, the daughters of the Ocean, come!

“This is a loose and free translation,” said the Professor, “of the opening speech of Prometheus in the Æschylean drama. You are aware that Æschylus departs from the popular form of the great legend, which includes other offences against the majesty of Zeus, besides the filching of fire for mortals. In the ‘Wisdom of the Ancients,’ Lord Bacon gives very elaborate details of the creation of man by Prometheus who mixed up clay and particles of other animals in the process. Then came the revelation of the important element of fire, which he brought down to men, having lighted a sheaf of birch-rods at the chariot of the Sun. Instead of thanking him for his beneficence, he is promptly reported to Jupiter. Then came the legend of Pandora, created by Prometheus at the command of Jupiter — Pandora, with her ivory box, which, if opened, would cast all manner of evils on the earth, which Prometheus refused to open, but the lid of which Epimetheus foolishly uncovered. Finally, came the execution and punishment of Prometheus, as narrated in Æschylus, his abandonment by man, his temptation by Mercury, his consolation from the nymphs, his prophecies to Io; and his final emancipation by the hands of Hercules. Lord Bacon draws out very elaborate lessons from the legend; discovering an allegory and parable everywhere, but showing at the same time the exceeding complexity and intricate involutions of his own mind. He makes out that Jupiter was pleased with the discontent and perfidy of men, because nothing is so offensive to the celestials as the extolling of human arts and sciences to the prejudice of the divine; and that the gods are pleased only when men are dissatisfied with themselves, their achievements, and their discoveries. Here, he has a rap at his old enemy, Aristotle. ‘Is not the ignorance and fatality of mankind to be extremely pitied, whilst they remain slaves to the arrogance of a few of their own fellows, and are dotingly fond of that scrap of Grecian knowledge, — the Peripatetic philosophy? Certainly the procedure of Empedocles, though furious, but especially that of Democritus, is to be preferred before the confident,

assuming and dogmatical school of Aristotle. And let men be assured, that the fond opinion that they have already acquired enough, is a principal reason why they have acquired so little.”

“I confess,” said Hester Hope, “that I cannot bear that kind of thing; I mean, destroying the poetic beauty of old and graceful legends, and finding in them nothing but allegories with some little bit of futile philosophy tacked on. Cannot philosophers, like Lord Bacon, leave poetry alone; that is, leave us the beautiful picture, without finding in every line of it some wretched moral?”

“There now,” said the Professor, “Miss Hope opens up that interminable controversy, whether Art shall subsist for its own sake, or shall be ancillary to higher things? We shall not discuss that question now. It would be drifting too far. But, confining ourselves to my own composition, poor as it is, I should like to get the opinion of the meeting, whether these lines bespeak the high ideal, of which we have been treating, — whether in fact they are of such a nature, apart altogether from their technical merit or demerit, as to be placed before the young mind as something elevating and transcendental.”

There was silence for some seconds, the question appeared to be so difficult of reply. But Father Dillon, at last, said:

“I fear we could hardly form an opinion from one reading, my dear Professor. Some of the lines caught my ear and fancy; some escaped both. Would it be too much to ask you to read the lines again?”

“Certainly not,” said the Professor. And he read the lines slowly and carefully again.

The *Sunetoi* looked at one another, uncertain which should speak first.

“I think the lines represent Prometheus as a poor creature,” said the doctor in a blunt manner. “He shouldn’t have complained of such paltry things as heat and cold; and then found comfort in the company of a few mermaidens. Martyrs are above such things. Their strong souls go out beyond them.”

“What think you, Mr. Hunt?” said Father Dillon.

"I think," said Mr. Hunt, "that Æschylus was trying to show how futile was the anthropomorphic conception of the Gods amongst the ancient Greeks. In that drama, Prometheus is weak; and Mercury is ridiculous. The nymphs are all right. He couldn't make them absurd —"

There was some faint applause and smiles amongst the ladies.

"But Io is piteous. I never heard what was the interpretation of that allegorical gadfly."

No one answered his questioning looks.

"But it was something that Æschylus made her the mother of Hercules. By the way, Professor, that poem is absolutely original, is it not?"

"Yes," said the Professor, a little alarmed. "You must remember that I called it a paraphrase, or free translation."

"Of course. But that line:

"Swifter and stronger than Cytherean pards,"

reminds me somewhat of Shelley."

"It is not in Shelley, nor in any other poet that I can remember," said the Professor, somewhat nettled. "Did you ever see that line before, Mr. Marshall?"

"Never!" said Mr. Marshall.

But the acute and tactful Chairman, noticing a little rise in the temperature, said:

"Miss Hope, we await your contribution."

"I think," said Miss Hope, in her own modest way, "that the highest concept that we should place before the minds of the young is the dualism of life — the fact that we belong to the universe, and are part and parcel of its nature and operations; and are still beyond the universe, and greater than all its material creation. I am of opinion that all our irreverence, our sensuous lives, our low gradings come from the unacknowledged, but current belief that the universe is monistic, and that we are very much the same. Up to the date of the larger revelations of Copernicus and Galileo, man was regarded as

the sum and end and total finality of creation; and, as such, he made the angels weep. Now under the larger revelations, science has made him a microbe and a parasite, and he sinks down to that level, forgetting that the Indefinitely little is just as important in the scale of Being as the Indefinitely Great. Now, it seems to me that children and youths should be taught that, as an integral part of the material Universe, they must accept their position, harness themselves to the team of universal Nature, obey her laws, fit themselves for her work, and entrain themselves with all the petty and gigantic forces, that are in perpetual operation everywhere. Hence, the first lesson to be derived from this fact is that, inasmuch as Nature is a vast mechanism, whose wheels are moving day and night without stop or surcease, the human mind must also understand that it has to take part in this gigantic and never-ceasing travail; and be it but the tillage of the soil, or the cleansing of a village street, the work is consecrated and ennobled by reason of the fact that it is part of the eternal and necessary programme of creation. Hence it follows also that work of every kind is noble, because it is part of the Duty of Being. But this is not enough. If we are part of the universe of matter by reason of our corporeal being, we are above and beyond that universe by reason of our spiritual essence — those seminal souls that are planted in us here to be developed, ripened, and foregathered in Eternity. These mysterious essences place us at once out and beyond the jurisdiction of the laws of matter. Time and space, laws of our material being, are no longer laws or categories of our souls. Time and space are conditions of matter. Spirit reaches beyond them, encompasses them, passes away from them in the Immensities and Eternities of immortal beings. The Universe, of which we are but atoms in a material sense, lies now at our feet. We are above it, and beyond it. We can even imagine it, — as our own poets have described, — as fading away into immeasurable nothingness, whilst the immortal spirit wings its way from abyss to abyss of an immensity

no longer lighted by the tapers of expiring suns, but by the supernal source of all light — the lamps of the City of God. The mind that shrank wearied here below from calculations of the weight and distance and velocity of the innumerable suns of space, now looks back and sees but a little star-dust scattered away along the horizons of infinity; and springing forward with a subtlety and swiftness to which sidereal velocities are halting and crippled, it wings its way along the immeasurable immensities; and because it is still finite, it finds its occupation for eternity in seeking after and discovering ever fresh and more perfect attributes of Him who alone encompasses Infinity. This is our nature, dual in its essence, insatiable in its aspirations, imperious in its demands, daring as a Titan, tragical in its failures, yet assured of its destiny. For it comes forth, a nuncio from Eternity bearing the sigil of God, and the credentials of the most High; and, after its little mission here, it is recalled to a higher ambassadorship, and then to a final kingship in its eternal home."

"I think," said Miss Hope, folding her paper, "that if this dualism of our nature were, more frequently, insisted upon, and explained, we should find more reverence amongst our people, and a higher sense of the dignity of being."

There was a pause; and Mr. Skelton said:

"I hope Father Dillon will not dare produce a sermon after that. Oh! if the Church would only allow the ladies preach."

"You would not dare pull out your gold chronometer so often," said Father Dillon, "nor shuffle in your seat, as if you were sitting on a furze-bush. But, Mr. Hunt, what about yourself? You proposed the entertainment; but you mustn't escape."

"I am quite ashamed to have to confess," said Mr. Hunt, "that my ideas and ideals have been somewhat anticipated by Miss Hope. I have only put into verse what Miss Hope so prettily gave us in prose."

"I hope tisn't a midnight visitor?" said Mrs. Holden, with a little affected shudder.

"It is, I regret to say," said Mr. Hunt. "*A caput mortuum*, which I found in my audience-chair."

"A what?" said Mrs. Holden, looking alarmed.

"*A caput mortuum*, or death's head," said Mr. Hunt calmly.

"How horrible!" said the lady. "Really, Mr. Hunt, I must say your visitors don't appear to be very nice people. A lady with a classical name, some old Pagan goddess, I suppose; then, a monk; then, a cynical person; then, a baby, and a dead baby! And now, a death's head — skull and cross-bones, and all that, I suppose. How can you make poetry out of that, I wonder?"

"Well, you must know, my dear Mrs. Holden," said the young man, "I have specially guarded myself against this being called 'poetry.' I have simply strung certain rhymes together, melodiously or otherwise; and the burden of them is somewhat, and to me embarrassingly, like what Miss Hope has said so prettily. But, may I go on?"

And the Chairman nodding assent, Mr. Hunt read:

A DEATH'S HEAD

I

Hallo! Old fellow, you? Well, this is a mild surprise!
I was dreaming tonight of a poet, with a universe in his eyes,
And an ivory forehead. But, there's a world in your socketless
stare,
And thanks to those artist-worms, the ivory too is there.

II

And, perhaps across the orbits of these two hollow caves,
Where now my firelight flickers, as sands 'neath the crimpling
waves,
There swept that endless drama, from the wings of the curtained
stage,
The boy that babbles, the woman who stares, and mumbling and
toothless age.

III

Well, friend, I'm delighted to see you, despite that hideous grin,
You come to be interviewed, of course, and I — where shall I
begin?

For thou, unfleshed, disrobed, art yet what doth symbolise
The end of the creatures that leap to death with a wild surmise.

IV

Thou hollow skull, where murmur the echoes of mysteries,
Caught from the limitless Vast — the sounds of eternal seas,
Speak and translate that Voice in accents of human speech,
And break the silence of bourns, where never our accents reach.

V

"*Hodie mihi! Cras tibi!*"¹ Ha, these are the words you said.
They seem to imply, my friend, that I dread the halls of the dead.
I, who am dead and dark, eight hours out of twenty-four,
What matters to die as a babe, or tottering reach four-score?

VI

"*Hodie mihi! Cras tibi!*"¹ — Good. But if such be the case,
Do you think that my spirit is tied to one peg in the tents of space?
Nay! I am a Child of the Universe, and at home wherever may
roll
Suns in a starlit space; or the orb of a sister soul.

VII

Pilgrim and Nomad I call every soul that has wandered here,
Out of the infinite gladness into this desert drear;
Stumbling 'neath one pale star, across a desolate space,
Leaden-shod every foot; and a veil upon every face.

VIII

And I, like an eagle blind from the blackness of this dark cage,
Against the walls of my dungeon, and against my captors rage;
Give him for home the mountain, where never a foot has trod;
Give me for empire, boundless space; give me for comrade, God!

¹"Today for me! Tomorrow for you!"

IX

What doth the eagle care for the faces staring around?
He is dreaming of crags and peaks; of a sky without line or bound;
And the eyes of men do not scare, if they sprang, as of old, from
stones,
Each but a little carrion-flesh, hung upon carious bones.

X

There, you are cackling again! What cynics you death's heads
are!
Two things are for ever mocking us — the grave and the silent star.
We stretch our hands to the skies — the universe would clasp.
Thunders the clay on our coffin. The grave has us in its grasp!

XI

Yes, Friend, I know full well, I shall be as you are now.
Eyeless the bony sockets; the brown earth on my brow!
Can I better things? No. It is wise to be even as we are.
Each to his *métier*. Clod to earth; to the sky, the star!

XII

He who hath fashioned all, hath He not wisely said:
"Bend thy back to thy task: and let the dead bury the dead!"
Today glides into tomorrow. Tomorrow is but today.
What can be wrought in the night and the darkness, who shall
say?

XIII

So, friend, that is your lesson. No dreaming, no doubts, no tears.
No far speculations darkened to idle doubts and fears.
Go! I shall be as thou. But still, I breathe the upper air.
I shall deal with Death when I meet him in his dark and dismal
lair!

"Yes!" said the Chairman, after a long pause. "It is certainly much on the same lines as Miss Hope's paper; but somehow not so inspiring and hopeful."

"How could you expect it?" said Mr. Hunt smiling. "Our judgments are cripples compared with the aerial intuitions of

our sisters. I have but travestied in epithets of rhyme the higher philosophy which woman alone can teach. As I elsewhere wrote, these lines, poems, rhythms of mine are but

“The sad mutation into vapid verse
Of Nature’s ever-changing sweets and sounds.”

“Doctor,” said the Chairman, “your contribution, please!”

“Contribution? To what?” said the doctor.

“Your little mite into our corbona,” said the priest. “Your Ideal?”

“*Mens sana in corpore sano!*” brusquely replied the doctor.

“And yours, Mr. Skelton, so long waited for, so long expected?”

Mr. Skelton took out a pocket-book, unfolded a crumpled paper, and demanded that it should be passed around.

“That’s my Ideal,” he said. “And yours too, ladies and gentlemen, with all your high-falutin’ prose and poetry.”

It was a note of the Bank of England for one thousand pounds.

The Chairman handed it back with a slight gesture of disgust.

“Mr. Marshall, what are you studying that engraving so carefully for? Do you think you have found the enigma?”

For Mr. Marshall, somewhat impolitely heedless of the last events of the programme, had been watching that engraving of Miss Fraser’s with ever-growing interest. He had an old envelope in one hand, and a pencil in the other. Just at the Chairman’s challenge he turned round and cried:

“Eureka! Eureka! One moment, please, Mr. Chairman! One moment’s pardon, ladies and gentlemen!”

A pitying smile rippled along the ranks of the *Sunetoi*, as the old man bent down over his task, and his pencil seemed to fly along the paper. Then, raising his hands, he said with a little deprecatory laugh:

“That picture was torturing me. I am afraid I have been impolite. But this is the interpretation. Is it not?”

And he read:

Two spirits on the midnight wind-blasts drave,
And swept to earth with broad and falchioned brands,
The lightning gleaming from their spectral hands
Showed the red ichor dripping from each glaive.
An aged monk tossed on his mattress-grave,
And moaned: There come to me some high commands
From the far shores and bourns of spirit-lands
To lift my feeble voice, and stammer: Save!

And lo! the night-winds ceased. The tempest swooned
Away in silence. And, beside his bed,
Their garments by the dawn-wind gently swayed,
Two spirits stood. One said: "Thou saint, dost wound
The heart of Justice, ere its bolts are sped?
But thou shalt be the victim. We've obeyed!"

The old man looked around and challenged admiration.

"Do you think that is the interpretation?" said the Professor, in a chill voice.

"Certainly," said Mr. Marshall.

"The old, old, old, ever-recurring idea in all literature of self-sacrifice," murmured Mr. Hunt.

But Mrs. Holden was looking impatiently towards the Chairman.

"Ha! he said. "We've kept the best wine to the last. Now, Mrs. Holden, your Ideal!"

And Mrs. Holden drew up her rings, had her piano-stool raised a little, ran her fingers carelessly along the keys, and then played, as she could play, *Fantasia* by Busoni after Sebastian Bach.

SESSION TWENTY-SEVENTH

GOING home together that night, Mr. Hunt complained of the cold. Then he tried to pass it off by asking Miss Hope abruptly:

"Did you ever read Goethe's 'Elective Affinities?'"

"Never!" she said, so firmly, that Mr. Hunt felt he had stumbled badly.

"Yes!" he said, musingly, after a time, "perhaps — but it occurred to me this evening, when listening to your paper, how curious is the affinity of certain minds, how they seem to move in varied, yet concentric circles."

"Well, it was strange," she said, "that we fell into the same line of thought. I was conjecturing whether this came from our reading the same books, or whether it is innate."

"It is certainly very startling sometimes," he said, "to find, on reading over the lives of men, whether in literature or otherwise, such singular affinity of thought and feeling with one's own experience. Sometimes, I am almost tempted to believe in metempsychosis, and to think that Mother Nature really finds it impossible to be always original, and has to create fresh souls on ancient models."

"Of course, you feel that it is nonsense," said his companion. "You may say, if you like, that the experiences and sensations of life are limited, and that therefore there is no great wonder at seeing them reproduced."

"I don't know," he said. "But it is strange that there should be such a singular affinity of thought between two individuals, such as we are, so differently brought up, and with such different prejudices and prepossessions. My, how that wind does cut! It is easterly, is it not?"

"Yes. I often think how very trying it must be for you to have to cross that Channel in such weather as this."

The Channel was certainly very uninviting and treacherous-looking just then. The tide was rushing out; and the east wind, with its intense and acrid bitterness, was trying to push it back, with the result that the water looked choppy and dangerous.

"Ha! I'm glad to know that I do not face the danger and discomfort quite alone," he said, shivering and drawing the fur collar of his coat about his ears. "It is something to have, if not a 'ministering spirit,' at least a sympathetic friend. I shall not mind it so much now."

"You have to cross in all weathers?" she asked.

"Yes! But in the launch there is little danger; and then over there, the office is very comfortable. Coming home at night, such a night as this, is not pleasant."

"You couldn't get lodgings over there?" she said, betraying her grave solicitude.

"No. And if I could, I should be deprived of a great deal. I shouldn't like now to have to give up our little meetings."

"Yes! They are pleasant," she said. "But, you know, you should be careful of your health. It is so dangerous crossing over there; and then, there is always the risk of a sudden chill, when coming out of a heated room."

He shivered again from head to foot; and she at once held out her hand, and said:

"Here am I preaching caution to you, and doing exactly the reverse. Do please get home as quick as you can. It is certainly bitterly cold!"

He shivered, said Good-night! and went away, leaving the girl to apprehend many things, whether he was unwell, whether it was her fault to have kept him there in the cold, whether she had been imprudent in expressing so much solicitude, whether there was an affinity between them, not elective, but congenital.

"I should like to know his sister," she said, as she threw aside her furs on the sofa. "How cultivated those Englishmen are!"

Then she took out her paper and read it again very carefully. It seemed to satisfy her. She murmured:

"I must ask him to let me have a copy of that poem."

Just as they assembled for the twenty-seventh Session, the Professor said:

"Do you know that I, even I, Professor in the Queen's College, Cork, did verily and indeed make a fool of myself the last evening on my return to Cork?"

The *Sunetoi* were interested. It is always soothing to human nature to feel that one of our acquaintances has made a fool of himself, especially if he be one that otherwise commands our reverence.

"I was in a second-class compartment," he continued; "the other occupants were two young ladies. Just as we passed out from the station at Carrigaloe, the idea suddenly struck me, can there be on this earth a more grotesque and utterly absurd and unreasonable attitude than that which is assumed in this country between the educated classes, on account of religious differences? I have been chilled, through and through, since I came to Ireland, by the dark, suspicious manner in which Protestants and Catholics seem to approach, in order to repel, each other. Here are people living side by side, kindly in their natures, more or less broadened in their sympathies, eager to help each other in any trial or emergency; yet as socially and intellectually removed from each other as if they were different races, speaking different languages. Then, I just thought, how happy we have been here. Here are three different nationalities represented — each, I presume, with its own traditions, its own sympathies, its religious and political predilections; and yet, during our four months' happy intercourse, not a breath of discord has disturbed our happy meetings. Then, the thought flashed on me that, perhaps, Protestants and Catholics in this country are much like the two old ladies, whom a mischievous youngster introduced to each other as stone-deaf; and who yelled and yelled, until at last one said, *sotto voce*, 'You're not deaf, are you?'

and the other, surprised, answered, 'Certainly not. Are you?' and they discovered that a mischievous imp, or impess, had been amusing herself. The thought got hold of my imagination, until I laughed and laughed again at the absurdity. The two young ladies left the compartment at the junction. For the first time in my life, I was taken for a lunatic. How my young lads in Cork would enjoy the joke, if they could hear it!"

"I heard something similar a little while ago," said Father Dillon. "I sent up a young lad from this place to Dublin for special lectures in technical science. He was thrown amongst a crowd of students, many of whom were from the North of Ireland. He seemed to take a fancy to one young fellow, whom he made his chum. He was Mac— something or other, and he had an accent as broad as Galway Bay. But they fraternised, and became quite attached to each other. One day, the Mac— said: 'Look here, Murray, you don't mean to say that you are a Roman Catholic?' And Murray said: 'Certainly I am. And you don't mean to say that you are an Orangeman?' And Mac— said: 'I certainly am. But I always thought that Roman Catholics were —;' and Murray said: 'And I was educated in the belief that all Orangemen were —.' And so the matter ended."

"It's all ignorance then?" said the Professor.

"Yes," broke in the doctor, "crass, brutal, stupid ignorance, inflamed by Sunday-school teaching, and — orators. Oh!"

That exclamation was significant; and the *Sunetoi* laughed. They knew the doctor's pet horror.

"Yes," said the doctor. "Orators! Hypocrites! Play-actors, who come out there on the platform and hustings, and wrap the senses of trusting fools in a cloud of words, so that they cannot see one ray of solid wisdom or reasoning. Oh! How I would sweep that whole race into perdition! Imagine! Here are a thousand, two thousand, three thousand human souls, weak, vacillating, fickle for the most part, and yet with

some dim idea that they will follow the right and just path, if someone will point it out to them. And here comes this fellow, affecting to be their prophet, their teacher; and for a bribe, or some political prejudice, he calmly and deliberately corrupts and debauches these poor, ignorant souls; and instead of pointing out to them the Truth, and the way in which they should walk, he leads them hopelessly astray into the quagmires and morasses of political or social infidelity. Of course, everyone knows that our people are colour-blind, that is, they cannot see facts. They only see the presentments of those facts reflected from the minds of others. And these others are so debauched by sectarian or political prejudices, and so zealous for their 'side,' that I venture to say truth is almost an impossibility — the whole question becomes one of expediency. I cannot see how the evil is to be extirpated. Education seems only to intensify its balefulness. A Trinity Professor sees in Maynooth only a museum of fossilised mediævalism. Maynooth retorts by calling Trinity 'the silent sister.' Probably, the Callan battery, invented by an old cassocked saint in Maynooth, was never heard of in Trinity, although it is well known on the continent. And you may be sure that Judge Webb's 'Veil of Isis' never crossed the boundary walls of Maynooth. It is the same everywhere, the Catholic says of Trinity or the Queen's, — the Protestant says of Maynooth or Clongowes, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?'"

"Then you consider a reconciliation hopeless?" said the Professor. "And yet we see your refutation here."

"Hopeless," replied the doctor, skilfully ignoring the latter allusion, "hopeless, until our countrymen of every denomination, and every political colour, learn above all things to seek for — and having found, to cling with desperation to — the Truth. But this seems an impossibility. Our minds are too agile, too swift, too nimble, too Grecian. We look around a subject. We never look at it. We make the worst witnesses in the world, because we see things in so many different ways.

We never see them under the white light of reason or common sense. You say to an individual, or a crowd: 'Look here! This is a fact, plain and indisputable, is it not?' They answer: 'Yerra, of course it is. It is as plain as a pike-staff!' Another comes along, and argues the direct contrary. In an instant, they go over to him: 'Begor, 'tis your're right. That fellow was only making a fool of us!'"

"Your're a strange people!" said the Professor musingly.

"Not one whit stranger than the rest of humanity," replied the doctor. "Look at your great English public! It changes every three years, putting the Whigs into power this time; and ejecting them the next time. Look at your politicians, your Cabinet Ministers! Scarcely one of them has not turned his coat, and some twice or thrice. Read the lives of any of your statesmen. You will see them advancing from Radicalism to Liberalism, from Liberalism to Conservatism, by leaps and bounds. The only difference is that you, good Saxons, are slow and heavy in your gyrations; the Celt is more nimble. But, all this brings us back to the main question, which has been before us all along — the necessity of first establishing, and then placing before the people, great and just principles and ideals."

"How?" said the Professor. "How would you convert a nation, if it be so sunken as you say?"

"Nothing simpler," said the doctor. "And yet, nothing can be more difficult. All mankind, I presume, are agreed that there is a certain code of ethical science, which is as fixed as the laws of the Medes and Persians, no matter how philosophers may argue about motives, causes, or influence. Every man has to be judged by that code. There is no true greatness where its precepts are violated. All moral greatness comes from their observance."

"Pardon me," said the Professor, "but may not a man be a great mathematician, a great warrior, a great poet, a great artist, without much moral rectitude?"

"Yes!" said the doctor, dwelling on the syllable, as if

gathering his thoughts together. "But he cannot be a great man. And, if his work in life is of such a nature that he has to deal with laws, or what is called the comity of nations, he cannot be great even there, unless he observes the strictest rules of justice and righteousness. Hence, — no, I withdraw! I am wrong. The word 'mathematician' betrayed me. A man may be a great mathematician without moral rectitude, because I cannot conceive what bearing ethics can have on lines and circles and parallels. But no! He cannot be a great poet, a great warrior, or a great artist without moral principles."

"But what moral principles had Alexander, or Hannibal, or Napoleon; and yet, they are reputed great?"

"And wrongly. Why do you never speak of Alaric the Great, or Tamerlane the Great?"

"Because they were scourges of the human race. They were despots, tyrants!"

"And what was Alexander? What was Napoleon? Were not these despots? You see how utterly wrong are all our notions of what greatness really is. The savage is in our blood, and in our fancies. We are caught by the glitter and glow of success — by picturesque daring, by a brilliant engagement, a brilliant poem, a brilliant speech. We do not stop to ask, is this man really great, or is it only pinchbeck and meretricious splendour?"

"You are upsetting the universal verdict of history," said the Professor. "Whatever may be said about your metaphysical views, they are in direct contradiction to the fixed and determinate sentence of mankind on its great personages."

"Possibly," said the doctor. "But, once separate greatness from goodness, adore the prize-fighter, worship your Byrons and Burns, enthrone your Napoleons; and then, — be consistent! Take down that cross, where everything noble and self-sacrificing and sublime is symbolised; and if you don't care to go back to the cats and ibexes of Egypt, put

the effigies of the ape and tiger on the pediments of your temples."

"I wish Mr. Hunt were here," said the Professor smiling. "What has kept him away?"

"He is seriously unwell," said Father Dillon.

"Unwell? We did not hear?" said the Professor, looking towards the doctor.

"Yes!" said the latter. "He has an attack of pleuro-pneumonia; and is pretty bad; but I think we'll pull him through. His youth averages a large percentage in his favour."

"I'm so sorry," said the Professor. "I wouldn't have spoken so flippantly, if I had known that so great a danger was hanging over our young friend. Of course, everything has been done? I need not ask."

"Everything!" said the doctor, "that we could think of."

"I think," said the Professor, "I should like to see him, before I return to Cork. May I, doctor?"

"Certainly," said the doctor. "He is quite conscious."

"I think," said Father Dillon, "we may adjourn the meeting. Your paper on the Greek Digamma will hold, Professor. And I hope Mr. Hunt will be with us, when it is read."

As they passed out through the long hall, the doctor felt a gentle hand laid on his sleeve, and he heard a whisper:

"May I say one word with you in private?"

"Certainly," he said, recognising the voice of Hester Hope. "Come in here."

He took the girl into his study, switched on the electric light, and placed a chair for her. Then, he saw that she had been weeping; but he appeared not to notice it.

"You said that Mr. Hunt was now out of danger," she said.

"No!" he replied bluntly. "I said I thought we could pull him through."

"Then there is danger?" she said.

"Of course, there is always danger in such cases. But there are nine chances to one in his favour."

"I fear I have to blame myself somewhat," she said, again weeping. "The night of our last meeting, he walked home with me; and I fear I kept him standing too long in the cold."

"Did he complain?" asked the doctor.

"Yes! he was shivering; and I bade him go home at once."

"He did not seem unwell here!"

"But he was. He never complains, you know. But it will be all right, if you say he's out of danger."

"But, my dear Hester, I cannot say that just yet," replied the doctor.

"But, you know — you said — there! If anything happens to him, I can never be forgiven."

"Make your mind easy, my dear," said the good doctor. "I can't say he's out of danger for two or three days; but he has every chance in his favour."

"I wish I could see him. But — I suppose, it would not do. Has Mrs. Holden been there?"

"Of course, she has," said the doctor brusquely. "She was going on with some d—d nonsense about propriety and that kind of rot. But I said: 'Look here, Jennie; you are an old woman; you're as good as gold; and you are stifling all your womanly instincts under this silliness about society, and all that rot. Go down and see the boy. He is away from his friends; and of course, he feels still we are but strangers.' So she went; and, of course, she is a good, motherly creature, and was able to do lots of little things for him."

"Then he has no nurses?" said Hester anxiously.

"Oh, but he has. Two nurses. We got them down from Cork at once. He is all right. Make your mind quite easy."

"If I only could feel that I wasn't to blame," she said.

"Tut-tut. I'm ashamed of you; and you a B.A. and all that. I tell you everything is in his favour."

"If only I could see him," she said, in a dreamy, half-conscious manner.

"Well, it would never do tonight," the doctor said. "He usually gets worse at night; and is sometimes delirious —"

The girl gasped for breath, and turned so white, that the doctor thought she was about to faint.

"You must know, you silly Hester, that all patients have an increase of temperature at night; and owing to the weak action of the heart, become slightly delirious. It means nothing."

"If only I weren't to blame," she said.

"Now, look here," said the doctor. "You meet me here tomorrow morning at ten o'clock. Are you engaged? No. All right. Then meet me here; and we will see Mr. Hunt. But, — be prepared for some change."

She started again.

"One word more," she said, detaining him. "You will consider me impertinent. But I am anxious, really anxious about another matter. Oh, dear, how can I say it?"

"Out with it," he said. "It can't hurt me!"

"But, it will. I know it will. But you will forgive me!"

"Go on," said the doctor, resignedly. "What a faculty for tantalising you young ladies have!"

"Well, what I was going to say was this. I notice — at our meetings, — Father Dillon looking pained sometimes. You know he is very patriotic and good; and sometimes he seems to feel that — that —"

"I'm going too far," said the doctor. "Of course I am. I must have the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Was he speaking to you?"

"Oh, no, no!" said the girl. "But he is so good. Couldn't you moderate a little — I mean, say things less brusquely? You know what I mean?"

"Of course. There! we won't discuss the matter. But the truth never hurts, my dear Hester."

"Yes!" she said, like Pilate of old. "But what is truth?"

Which little saying left the doctor thinking.

SESSION TWENTY-EIGHTH

WHEN the doctor and Hester entered the sick-room the following morning, a young lady, somewhat tall, and with a certain stateliness of manner, rose up from her seat near the bed and stood still.

"The doctor," said the patient feebly, whilst his eyes were fixed upon Hester Hope. And then he whispered, so that he could be heard:

"My sister, Olive!"

The sister at once advanced, and shook hands cordially with the doctor, and thanked him for all his great kindness. Then the latter drew Hester forward, although she seemed anxious to shrink away, and said:

"One of our Club, Miss Hunt! I dare say your brother has mentioned Miss Hope's name to you!"

There was a formal greeting between the ladies; and Hester stood still, embarrassed, because the doctor had gone over and was reading the chart with the day-nurse. She hardly knew what to do, or say, as she felt the large eyes of the stranger resting on her, and studying all her features, until she heard her name called:

"Hester! Miss Hope!"

She stooped down towards the patient. He put out his hand. It was as hot as fire in hers. She felt it burning through her glove.

"I knew you'd come. I was hoping to see you all along."

She did not know what to reply. She could only look at the hot, pinched face before her, and try to keep back her tears. She dreaded any manifestation of sympathy before this girl, who stood still as a statue by the bedside. The doctor came to her relief.

"You are much better this morning," he said. "Another day or two, and you will have turned the corner."

"Will you examine the lungs?" asked the patient feebly.

"No! Not today! There's no necessity. The congestion is rapidly resolving. Be sure to take all the nourishment you can easily bear, — stimulants and all. He's a good patient, nurse, is he not?"

"Oh, yes," she replied. "He is quite passive in our hands, except that he objects sometimes to the stimulants."

"Now, my boy," said the doctor, "there must be no mistake here. You must take the whiskey as I ordered it. Remember! Miss Hunt, my wife will be down in the afternoon, and will make all arrangements for your comfort. I hope you had a pleasant run across."

"Yes!" she said, calmly. "It was a little rough outside Holyhead. Nearing Ireland, we had a better time."

"That's the first time I ever heard a good word spoken about our Irish climate, or our Irish temper, which are so much alike!" said the doctor. "Now, we must go!"

The young man seemed to detain Hester's hand in his; and he said:

"You will come soon again?"

She looked at the doctor.

"Yes! when all is well. Just now, you know, you might be tempted to write verses to another midnight visitor. Come along, Ægina!"

All of which, being Irish-Greek to the stately English girl, she merely looked on, touched the hand of the doctor, and Hester's glove, and sat down again.

"What icicles these English are!" said the doctor, as he walked rapidly homewards. "They freeze you up by that awful frigidity of theirs; and then, you come to know them, and somehow I, at least, find something genuine in them. After all, there is an element of truth in their nature."

"I am afraid," said Hester, "that she considered me an intruder. I see the awkwardness of it now. How was she

to know that we were merely clubites with some kind of fraternal feeling between us?"

A remark which made the doctor look into a show-window, where he caught himself reflected as smiling.

"Well," said the doctor, "I'll tell you what we shall do. I'll propose Miss Hunt as a member at our next meeting; and then she can see us as we are. Meanwhile, she is going to remain with us. It would never do to send her to a hotel. And, as you say, there must be some *fraternal* feeling between us."

Hester looked at the doctor; but he was quite grave.

"Besides," he said, "I apprehend not a little fun from Jennie and herself. It will be as good as a play to see Jennie toying with this icicle; and trying to keep up her Irish dignity, whilst she is melting with kindness and sympathy. She's sure to bring in this unfortunate ancestor of mine, who has been sleeping soundly for fifty years. And then I'll bring in Bob, and set him at her. 'Twill be the rarest fun we ever had."

"Doctor," said Hester, "do you know I fear you are unkind."

She didn't mean it; and he knew it.

"No matter!" he said. "I'm in excellent spirits this morning. Hunt is out of danger!"

And he was rewarded more amply than if a fat fee were pushed into his palm, by seeing the look of delight and gratitude that passed like a sunbeam across her face.

The next session was a memorable one, and also somewhat exciting, to the *Sunetoi*. The very presence of a young English girl, with her pallid style of beauty lit up by large and not incurious eyes was quite sufficient to make some nerves tingle. The ladies were anxious to measure and catalogue her; the gentlemen were anxious to be worthily catalogued and measured by her. Probably, Father Dillon was the only individual who kept his equanimity intact. He had only the abstract interest of the little society in view.

"I had thought," said the Professor, after the doctor had introduced his young guest, proposed her formal adoption, and had it unanimously, and with acclamation passed, "to introduce to your notice this evening the intricate question of the Greek Digamma. But on consideration, I remembered that this problem was usually a stepping stone to a Bishopric; and as my ambition does not look in that direction, I decided to drop that subject, and take up one more in consonance with my own tastes and more in connection with the interesting papers that have been lately read at our meetings. I noticed that there is some consensus of opinion amongst us, that there is a singular lack of careful and critical and consecutive thought in the world of today. The learned doctor seems to think that this defect is most conspicuous in the political life of his own countrymen. But I am of opinion that it is a world-wide evil, permeating all classes of human society, and interfering everywhere with the progress of the species. All those modes of human thought which we consider dangerous and erroneous, such as Anarchism, Nihilism, Socialism; all those furious controversies which inflame the passions of whole nations, such as the controversies about the Dreyfus and Ferrer cases; even all our religious and scientific discussions, wherein men differ more deeply than even in political matters — all arise from one cause; that is, illogical and unmethodical ways of thinking. It is more difficult than we can imagine to meet a perfectly sane man, by which I mean a man who is capable of studying a question under the cold, white light of reason, apart altogether from the parti-colours that are thrown upon it from the sidelights of passion, or innate or acquired prejudice. Now, we must always remember that thought, opinion, judgment is in each individual nothing but the subjective impression of objective facts. By far the most important question for us, therefore, to solve is, how far that subjective impression *in se*, and its subjective expression as externated in judgment, or language, is co-ordinate with the external and objective fact that comes

under its consciousness. Hence, the first thing to ascertain is, what are the limitations of this intellectual and spiritual faculty; and what are the qualities of the external fact brought under its cognisance. It is quite clear, in the first place, that all intellectual faculties are not alike. There is a difference between the intellect of a Newton and that of an idiot in the public ward of a hospital. There is a difference between a Shakspeare and a mattoid. Both might see the same external facts, and the senses may be equally acute; but how different the brain-impression! And, again, the same brain might view an objective fact in quite a different way, according as it is affected by age, or sickness, or delirium. A little less blood to the brain, and the most perfect mind sees things that never could exist, never did exist. The lesion of one cell will turn a philosopher into a fool. Emerson, that fine genius, addressing a body of young academicians and entrancing them with his views of 'The American Scholar,' was quite a different person from the Emerson who stooped over the coffin, which held the remains of his dearest friend, and murmuring: 'I cannot recollect his name,' was gently borne away. Southey, writing article after article for the *Edinburgh Review*, and Southey vacantly gazing along his crowded bookshelves, incapable of understanding the titles even of his beloved books, were totally different personalities. The same may be said of Swift, of Coleridge, of Moore; and in our own days, of Maupassant and Nietzsche. Whatever be thought of the morality or immorality of the latter's philosophy, one cannot refuse him the tribute of a tear, as we see him bending over the tiny wavelets on the Adriatic coast, and calling: *Butsch! Butsch! Butsch!* to the foam that broke at his feet. And so we find that not only is the capacity of seizing brain impressions different in different individuals; but, different even in the same individual according as it is modified by age or disease. These, then, are the limitations of our subjective impressions of the external world. But there are also internal limitations of brain-power,

which are not a little curious. As a rule, in the normal brain impressions are involuntary; but are at once seized by the grappling-hooks of the brain, and transmuted into thought and emotion by the action of the supreme will, which holds the power of deliberately limiting these operations, and using the subjective impressions according to its choice. Where the will fails to control these impressions, and keep them from breaking forth into external acts or words, we have what is called generically, insanity. But, strange to say, there is an occult faculty in the mind, quite independent of the will and operating without its cognisance, which is designated sub-cerebration, or secondary action; and where the operations of the brain reach their highest capacity. At first sight, this seems incredible — that brain-power, set in motion from occult and unrecognisable causes, should not only act in complete independence of the ordinary motive influence of the will; but that these motions should be recognised as not only superior to the ordinary operations of the cerebral faculties, but as reaching an altitude of mental process, to which the brain, in its ordinary and even in its stimulated operations, is altogether unequal. What the inspiring power is; what occult and altogether mysterious force lies behind that ever-active sub-cerebration, and sets it in motion, and directs its operations, in the impenetrable darkness of the cerebral cells, and altogether unknown to the superior faculties, — remains, and will ever remain, a profound secret. All that we know is, that in sleep, or rather in the shadowy twilight that intervenes between sleep and waking, when the master of the house, the autocratic will, is still bound in the chains of slumber, these half-rebellious forces are in full operation, and can produce results that are the despair of the waking faculties, when again under the dominion of the will. Hence, poets have struck out lines, or rather, ideas and words have been submitted and suggested to them by the Ariel of their dreams, that no effort, no whipping up of the waking faculties can ever recall, or rival; and the mathematician has solved

problems in the same condition, that remain the despair of his waking hours. Furthermore, this strange and mysterious faculty actually pursues its operations, even while the mills of the brain are going full steam ahead! at the command of the will, and under its direct and voluntary control. Quite independent of this despot, outside the range of his vision, and beyond his control, yea, even when he has his eyes on every faculty, and every faculty is concentrated to the fullest tension on its own work, this mysterious cerebration is quietly carrying on its rebellious operations, and is only cognisable, when it suddenly breaks forth in results, that put the voluntary operations of the brain to shame. A writer has pursued the phantoms of his own creation, and is arranging and rearranging their mutual relations, when suddenly he seems to have come bolt upright against a blank wall, and all the threads of his little narratives fall blankly from his hands. He cannot go a step further. The creative, or cosmical power, has become paralysed. His little drama has come to an end. If he be wise, he will draw the curtains here; and huddling up his phantoms, leave them to themselves, and take up another line of thought, even a fresh creation. It may be that after labouring freely at this new work, perhaps a month, perhaps six months after its commencement, and when all the characters of his former stage had almost passed into oblivion, suddenly the wizard of the brain-caves opens up a fresh avenue of thought; and the blank walls that blocked his former operations fall down and reveal long vistas of life, where the characters of his drama may pursue their destiny to the final scenes, which he had foreseen, but could not reach. So, too, a mathematician pursuing an intricate problem with all his reasoning and imaginative faculties bent on his work, feels himself utterly helpless. He can foregather all his fugitive thoughts, and whip them on to their destined task; but in vain. That problem refuses to be solved. He leaves his desk in despair, and turns aside; and whilst dreaming of other things, lo! in the twinkling of an eyelid, the problem

has solved itself. Or, he is totting up vast columns of figures, four or five figures deep; and his mind wanders. Mechanically, he pursues his task, although his attention has run away from the columns before him. But he slips, he miscalculates a figure; and instinctively, he stops, summons back the vagrant faculty, orders it to its work, and finds that the mysterious monitor, who had cried, *Cave!* was right. Why do I recall all these things which are the personal experiences of every individual? Because, I wish to show how marvellous, how phenomenal are the operations of the mind; and how sense-impressions of external facts or entities may not only differ in themselves, but may be also transmuted into different ideas, according to the powers and faculties of the brain. It is not needful to speak here of external things, nor to enter into the ancient controversy, as to whether the mind, conscious of its sense-impressions, can reach beyond them to the outer world of fact; and whether, if this is possible, it can penetrate beyond the *phenomena*, and discern the *noumena* of the material world. I wish to reach rapidly the objection, that if all this be true, certainty about anything, — certainty about our sense-impressions, certainty about the net product of these impressions when worked up and elaborated by the mental faculties, conscious and unconscious; certainty about the existence of a world, external to ourselves, can never be obtained. But, here we meet with such a consensus of opinion, that all doubts and objections are stilled and silenced into acquiescence; and we find that reason, and the certainty that comes from reason, are vindicated in a manner that seems to be almost mathematically perfect. Hence, mankind are at one, for the experience of mankind is uniform, about certain historic data, so as to exclude all incertitude. So, too, about scientific facts. So, too, about its moral standards of perfection. Just as we say, Mount Everest is the highest mountain peak on the globe; as at a certain place off the coast of Africa or Polynesia, the ocean reaches its greatest depth; as Rome exists, and

Babylon did exist, so are we, that is, all mankind, agreed, that the model of all human and Divine perfection was the God-Man, who stood in Judæa nineteen hundred years ago, and left His life and His utterances as the highest standard to which the world could attain. By that life all mental and moral perfection must be judged. It is the criterion of all that is holy and sacred. It is the touchstone of all sterling and unalloyed greatness. But, just as in Nature there may be manifestations of powers, destructive yet magnificent, such as tornadoes, earthquakes, tidal waves, lightning flashes, so there may be amongst men certain characteristics which are striking by reason of their terror or their power, but which are maleficent, and therefore, fall far short of the supreme standard. It is not only the Miltonic conception of Satan, but the theological analysis of Satan, that is magnificent. He is an Archangel, retaining all his tremendous powers of a spiritual and intellectual being, — all his original endowments, even though distorted and warped by malignity, and the dreadful consequences of his fall. He is great, even sublime in his maleficence. But, we should not dream of erecting a statue to him in our public squares, or placing his picture in our temples. And, in the same way, mere intellectual greatness and force, severed from the moral law, and directed only towards maleficent purposes, should never command the admiration, and never tempt the imitation, of ourselves or the after generations of our race. I thoroughly agree, therefore, with the doctor, and the other members of our Society, that we must never allow our imaginations to be swept along by an unchastened and unreasonable admiration for what are called 'great men.' But we should have always before us certain principles, a certain unswerving standard of greatness; and then the faculty of ascertaining the facts, the inner essences of things, and bringing them up to be tested by that standard. This is the only way to get at Truth; it is the only way in which we can conquer the temptation to be led aside by sentiments of personal or political expediency —

that fatal tendency to compromise, and to lull our judgments and our consciences into an ignoble acquiescence with what is comfortable and pleasant, at the sacrifice of principles and personal rectitude. For, as the whole reasoning of Euclid rests on a few basal axioms, so the whole of life, private and public, political and religious and social, depends on a few plain palmary principles, which are revealed, as well as axiomatic. Depart from these, and all the problems of life become insoluble; and the social body becomes a tangled web of anarchism and communism on the one hand, or a military despotism on the other, seeking justification by fallacious and sophistical reasoning, and acknowledging no guidance, but that of the Lord of Misrule."

"Bravo!" cried the doctor. "That's better than fifty Greek Digammas!"

"I wish Mr. Hunt were here," said Father Dillon, looking helplessly around. "He always seizes on some point and elucidates it."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Marshall, bowing in his own chivalrous way towards Miss Hunt, "perhaps, Miss Hunt would flatter the Professor by some gentle criticism?"

The marble pallor of the girl's cheek seemed to be faintly flushed as she said:

"I fear it would seem impertinent at my first introduction. The only point that seized hold of my fancy was the remark of the Professor, when he spoke of an author coming bolt upright against a blank wall. I have seen that. I have known authors coming exactly to that point in their work which the Professor describes. But, alas! they could not lay down their pens, and pursue other subjects. For the little children lay sleeping in their cradles; and the old-young mother was patching their garments under the light of a smoky lamp, and beside a fireless hearth; and the weary man was driving a weary brain at the call of the manager through the evening post. And there could be no rest, nor reprieve there, until the pen fell from the paralysed fingers,

and the tortured nerves found their opiate in death. It is a good thing to be free — free to work, or rest, as one pleases. It is an ill thing to be whipped to one's death by the overseer."

Miss Hunt had paused.

And then there was great silence.

SESSION TWENTY-NINTH

"WASN'T it very forward of that girl to speak out so boldly at a first introduction?" said the doctor's wife that evening when the meeting had broken up, and the guests had departed, and only the favoured Mrs. Skelton had remained behind, by special request, for a little *seanchus*.

"It was, my dear," said Mrs. Skelton, "but you know these English are not like us."

"Of course I like her very much, indeed," said Mrs. Holden. "She is very quiet, and unobtrusive in the house; but very uncommunicative. I was anxious to know something of them, not from curiosity — you know, I am quite above all that; but out of sheer kindness, because you can't do as much for people you don't know as for people you do know."

"Quite true," said Mrs. Skelton, "quite true, indeed, my dear. And surely, when you were good enough to bring her into your house, and she, a perfect stranger, she should have repaid your kindness."

Mrs. Holden shot a suspicious glance here at her bosom friend; but the latter did not notice. Her conscience was clear of any subtle and secret motive.

"But," continued Mrs. Skelton, growing happier all the while, as she, good soul, knew she was giving pleasure, "they must be somebodies. The Admiral called to see Mr. Hunt today."

The words were simple, and simply spoken, like all the great words of history, from "the die is cast" of the great Cæsar, down to "Up, lads, and at them" of Wellington, which, however, are legendary. But, if Mrs. Skelton had said the Archangel Gabriel, or the Man in the Iron Mask, she could not have astonished more, or pleased more, her friend.

"The Admiral?" she cried in an ecstasy of surprise and admiration. "Are you quite sure?"

And Mrs. Skelton, rising to the importance of the situation, said in a more dramatic manner:

"Quite sure! my dear. He was in the Club afterwards; and he said he had been to see young Hunt."

"But are you quite sure he didn't send his Secretary, or drive up and leave his card?"

"Well, I'm only giving his own words," said Mrs. Skelton, humbly. "And they were: 'I have just been down to see young Hunt. He has been pulled through right well.'"

All the time the doctor's good wife had been picturing the wonderful scene to her own imagination. She had seen the two bays, their coats shining like satin; the outriders, the footmen. She saw the Admiral alight, and go up stairs. She heard his words. "Perhaps," she thought, "he may now call here. He surely must have met Miss Hunt; and she must have told him where she was staying."

Oh, blissful thought! The Admiral's carriage at *her* door! The passers-by staring! The report carried around Queens-town on the wings of the wind! Perhaps — but this would be too much to expect; yet if the Fates would only be kind enough to contrive that just at that moment Mrs. Babbage should be passing by, — what a consummation of happiness, what a perfection of bliss it would be!

Meanwhile, the young lady, who was the centre and source of all these radiant dreams, had left the meeting on her way to her brother's rooms to see that all was well for the night. She overtook Miss Hester Hope just at the corner of the square, and said simply:

"May I walk a little way with you towards home?"

Hester flushed with pleasure, and then got alarmed and nervous. How could she know what this strange, silent, English girl was going to say. Yet, she had already formed her conception of the character of Olive Hunt. That one remark at the close of the last Session showed a tenderness of feeling

which was hardly to be expected from so stately an individual. Hester felt assured of this; and, then, there crept into her heart a hope that this might be the beginning of a new and priceless friendship.

"This is my way," said she, pointing up the hill. "You may not like this steep hill."

"Oh, I don't mind," said her companion. "Perhaps, there is a short way back to my brother's."

"There is. I shall show it to you, when we get to the top," said Hester.

There was a little pause; and then Olive said:

"I have gathered from Reginald that he has met great and unexpected kindness here. His letters have been very enthusiastic; and have kept me quite in touch with all your doings here."

"Yes! He's a great favourite in our little Society. In fact, he is our mainstay and chief help. He is always ready. Every subject seems to come quite easily within his comprehension."

"But the whole idea is so novel. It is a most unexpected experience. We could not have believed such a thing possible over there."

And she pointed with her glove out beyond the seas.

"It was Father Dillon's idea," Hester said. "I don't know what suggested it to him; but he is very open and broad-minded; and he knew the Professor intimately, and then he drew us all together."

"He is very handsome," said Olive Hunt, musingly.

"He is very kind and clever," said Hester Hope. "You see it was an experiment; and apparently a dangerous one. But he has managed by great tact, so far, to keep us in perfect harmony, yet allowing us the most perfect freedom of opinion."

"But it is this universal and generous kindness towards Reginald in his illness that has touched me so deeply. Everyone is so solicitous, so kind."

"I suppose it is our Irish way," said Hester Hope. "We

do enjoy a little fun and fighting, when all is going well; but, in the hour of trouble, all is forgotten, but the duty of kindness and benevolence."

"Well, I do hope you will come to see Reginald often," said Miss Hunt, and fortunately it was night, and the merciful darkness covered the blushes of her companion. "He seems to like it; and perhaps, after a little while, your friendship may extend to his sister."

It was a pretty little speech; and Hester was mute beneath it. Then the stranger said Good-night! and holding Hester's hand in her own, she stooped down and touched her forehead with her lips. At the next meeting of the *Sunetoi*, she appeared as frigid and formal as if she had never heard the name of Hester Hope.

Verily, there seemed a great gap in the little Society since Reginald Hunt had been unwell. His vacant chair, where he lounged, as a Cabinet Minister lounges on the green benches in the House, seemed to emphasise the lonely feeling which his absence caused; and it needed all the strong, masterful instinct of perseverance on the part of the Chairman to keep the Society from degenerating into a mere club for gossip or desultory conversation. Of course, the musical element was always assured by the presence of Mrs. Holden, whose *repertoire* was inexhaustible; but, it was not so easy to keep the literary element in evidence. He could not press the members too closely, knowing that they all had their own daily avocations, and therefore, but limited time for external work. He mercifully took the burden of this meeting on himself, with all kinds of polite apologies for the intrusion.

"The Professor's paper read at the last meeting," he said, "set me thinking, and drove me to my books. This is the great advantage of such papers — their suggestiveness — their power of setting a train of thought in motion, which needs to be maintained by additional thought gathered from the storehouses of the world's great thinkers. I have confirmed every statement made by the Professor as to the action

of our sub-intellectualism, or unconscious cerebration; and I have seen one or two remarkable instances quoted, which are at least interesting in themselves. Sir William Hamilton discovered the method of Quaternions suddenly on the 16th October, 1843, as he was walking towards Dublin with his wife. 'I felt a problem to have been at that moment solved, — an intellectual want relieved, — which had haunted me for at least fifteen years before.' Charlotte Brontë remained sometimes for weeks unable to pick up the thread of a story. Then, some morning, thinking of something else, the whole thing would flash upon her mind, and the clear avenues of thought would lie open before her. I believe the instances of this curious operation are very numerous; and at one time, it was supposed to militate against the standard doctrine of free volition, and to savour of automatism. But I think fuller investigations have proved that these occult operations are also the result of a habit acquired, as all habits are, by repeated exercise of the faculty, which then becomes automatous in itself. This occurs, as we know, in corporal motions, whereby we walk, or write, or ride, without volition. I suppose not one man in a million thinks of the physical act of placing one foot before the other, when he is going to church, or to the bank, or to his place of business. The action is purely automatous. The will-power seems to have nothing to do with it. And we know that when walking with a companion, we can carry on several operations at the same time, — speaking, laughing, singing, whilst our limbs are moved in perfect harmony, of which we are absolutely unconscious. But what is this automatism, but the habit acquired in our childhood by painful falls, and stumbles, by rushing against chairs and tables to save ourselves? One philosopher sees a similar analogy in the strange magnetic power, by which, again unconsciously, nay, even against our wills, we are drawn towards some great personality, or feel a predilection for a certain race, or nation, or individual. It is again the automatic action of certain occult faculties in our system, which, having

been acted upon and influenced by principles and emotions in early life, have retained the singular bias or propulsion towards certain things, which at a later period, owing to different influences, we regard almost with aversion. But the question becomes more difficult when we ask why these occult or dormant faculties are so much more powerful than those that are brought under the dominion of consciousness? For that seems to be an admitted fact; and it is confirmed by the experience of those who are addicted to violent stimulants like opium and hashish, which, at certain stages of mental excitement, undoubtedly induce unconsciousness. It is a moot question whether poets, like Coleridge and Shelley, and in our own times, Francis Thompson, could consciously elaborate those poems, which are altogether *sui generis*, and seem to belong to the language of another world. Critics even have hinted that such literature is not quite sane, however exalted and beautiful it might be. But it is a proof, at least, that unconscious cerebration is capable of producing results of which the conscious action of the mental faculties is incapable.

“It seems to me to prove that, whilst genius is only another name for mental irritability, on the other hand, repose is absolutely necessary to bring out the powers of the suspended or dormant faculties of the brain. You may have noticed that neurotic patients, whose nerves are weakened by gout, or some other malady, are perfectly able to write a steady hand, to carry a full glass of wine to the lips, or perform any other similar duty with ease, when alone, or in the company of friends, when those actions are unconsciously, or automatically performed. But, let consciousness intervene, let them watch themselves, or deem themselves watched by others; and they are no longer able to control their nerves. The hand shakes, and all the nervous acts are paralysed, wholly or partially. This comes from the fact that in repose, that is whilst the mind keeps aloof, the nerves are capable of carrying on their ordinary work; but consciousness creates nerve tension, which is followed by vibration, just as when a boy pulls the

end of a string together; and the same power is no longer there. But there is an additional, and a deeper reason for the superiority of unconscious action, or automatism, over the conscious stimulation of the brain faculties by the dominant will. It is this. We have seen that this apparently automatic action is the result of habits, long since acquired, but allowed to remain dormant; just like a language, once laboriously learned, and then apparently forgotten, or like the habit of swimming or riding, which has been discontinued, but is never really lost. In truth, just as memory in old age, calling on the more recent formations of brain-cells or brain-tissue, fails to elicit impressions, although, when the earlier formations are challenged, they respond with activity and instantly produce the impressions of childhood and youth; so, these earlier formations, being much more vigorous in their repose or action than the cellular tissues formed in later life, when probable degeneration had set in, suddenly respond to some secret call of Nature; and accomplish results which are impossible to the later and more debilitated formations. In truth, these sudden and unexpected revelations of hidden strength are simply the manifestation in action of powers that were formed in youth and earlier manhood, and which, notwithstanding the fact that they were hidden away and left inoperative by the subsequent cellular formations of brain-substance, never lost their energy or vitality, but sprang into action, and revealed their hidden potencies, when they found that the degenerate cells of the later formative periods had failed to respond to the will, and were unable to do its work. Hence, it may be concluded, that, if only we knew by what mysterious summons those earlier and inextinguishable powers could be compelled to yield up their impressions, and exercise their activities, we might say that the brain can never grow old; but would be the last organ in the body that would fail to preserve its vitality. Geologists tell us, that we may take away layer after layer on the earth's surface, each but a mass of insensate and inert matter; and at last come down to one, which suddenly

breaks forth in explosions of hidden gases; so stratum after stratum in the human brain may be nothing more than dull cortical, or cellular matter, feebly sensitive and feebly responsive; and then, one lying far beneath the surface reveals a sudden and hidden vitality, showing that it had kept in reserve all the strength of youth and its virility, whilst the weaker and newer powers formed in a period of degeneracy were irresponsible above its head. And hence, too, we know that the great principles of religion and morality, impressed on us in our childhood, are never obliterated. The weaker reasonings of later life have no power over the lessons that were sculptured deep on the tablets of our souls, and there hardened into a permanency that resists all later experiences."

"I am very pleased," said the Professor, "that Father Dillon's researches have borne out my theories in this abstruse and difficult matter. I do not think that physiologists or psychologists shall ever penetrate thoroughly the mysteries of the brain. In fact, the deeper one goes, the more strange and interesting are its manifestations. Perhaps the very mystery of heredity and atavism can be traced to these occult operations of the brain-centres of which we are speaking. I think naturalists now are of one mind as to the causes of peculiar features in the lower creations, such as the habit of the dog of throwing up dust or earth with his hind feet, or making three rounds before sitting down to rest. 'Hereditary habits' is the expression used to express such phenomena; but the question arises where do these hereditary habits arise; what is their location, or centres of influence in the animal. And there can be but one answer—in the vaso-motor nerves, radiating from the centres of their impulses in the brain. But again, it may be asked: Whence came such instincts, and how have they been transmitted and localised? And the only answer is: That they have come down from the brain-centres of ancestors, where through necessity or habit, they were formerly localised, and where owing to their extraordinary vitality they subsisted through all changes, climatic and other-

wise, until finally they emerge with unbroken strength in far-distant, and perhaps even modified grades of the same original species. But I fear we are intruding, Father Dillon, on the doctor's domain. After all, it is the province of the medical man."

"Not at all," said the doctor. "I am by no means so conservative as all that. I make inroads upon theology myself; and in fact, nowadays all sciences are open to those who care to read. There is but one point where I feel quite competent to speak. It is on that subject of cerebral or mental degeneration; and this is interesting, not only from the medical, but from the literary standpoint. How far genius and insanity are akin; how far the successes of a Cæsar or a Napoleon may be accounted for by the fact that they were epileptics, is one open to dispute. But from Swift downwards, we have instances of literary geniuses withering from the top, and suffering in old age that *mollities*, or as the French call it, *amollissement*, which to some seems deplorable, but which to me seems no more painful than second childhood. This malady generally arises from malnutrition of the brain; the malnutrition in turn is derived from arterial degeneration, the loss of elasticity in the arteries, and their gradual crumbling away until they fail to send supplies to the cerebral centres. Again, in a kind of vicious circle, this *atheroma*, or arterial degeneration arises from weakness in the nerve-centres, which weakness creates the calcareous deposits which are found in atheromatous patients. And, hence, it is concluded that gout, or its sister diseases that produce calcareous degeneration, is at the root a nervous disorder, — the neurosis being at the same time its cause and its effect. This is the reason why very few old people are free from tense and tortuous and nodulous arteries. A doctor, seeing such cases, will at once say, Gout! But whence gout? From dyspepsia. And whence dyspepsia? From defect of nerve power. And whence defect of nerve power? From the gradual weakening of the nerve-centres in the brain, which, in turn, are further

debilitated by malnutrition arising from defective arterial action. It is never overwork. It is worry, excitability, passion, that are the causes of the wear and tear of the cerebral tissue, on the one hand; and are themselves, in turn, the consequences of cerebral weakness and irritability."

"Take care, Mr. Marshall," said Father Dillon, "I believe the composition of one poem uses up more tissue than the writing of an ordinary book."

No, there had been a great transformation in the external appearance and general manner of Mr. Marshall since Reginald Hunt's illness. Whether it was the sudden apparition of such a gifted and beautiful woman as Olive Hunt, or whether it was that he felt a rival removed and that he now shone a solitary poetical planet in the empyrean, we do not know. The ladies were inclined to the first interpretation; the gentlemen to the second. But one thing was clear. Mr. Marshall was changed. He had tamed down his poetic impulsiveness, and had smoothed out his uncouth, if agreeable mannerisms. He was almost painfully quiet. He was painfully polished. His shirt-front was immaculate. His cuffs were enamelled by careful laundry. A solitaire flashed in the former. Gold links held the latter together. But the patent tops to his boots appeared to be the culmination of an elegance that was so mysterious as to be almost painful. Altogether, there was a transformation. The old gentlemanly traits that are never to be acquired and that can never be lost were there still; but now was added an external lustre, which to some eyes seemed to enhance; to others to detract from his natural elegance of manner.

Mrs. Skelton had noticed it first; and had whispered to her friend:

"The idiot is dead!"

"Idiot? What idiot?" said Mrs. Holden.

"Between him and the Earldom," said Mrs. Skelton.

"How do you know?" said her friend, who was beginning to look towards Mr. Marshall with new-born admiration.

Imagine, she thought, with that rapidity that runs through the feminine mind in such a crisis, — imagine a Lord, a real live Lord, not only our guest, but our confidential friend! Avaunt, thou Admiral! *A bas*, you poor little pinchbeck Knights down from Cork, made by the accident of a Royal Visit! Here is a genuine nobleman, who can trace his blood back six or seven centuries at least! What a glorious privilege to entertain such a person! What a humiliation to Mrs. Babbage and the small herd that stable with her!

But Mrs. Holden kept these thoughts closely to herself. She shrugged her shoulders, and when Mrs. Skelton answered the last question with the monosyllabic: “Robert!” Mrs. Holden said in an accent that seemed to make little of lordships:

“I tell you ’tis Olive. I saw his eyes following her the whole evening.”

SESSION THIRTIETH

WHEN Father Dillon at the close of the last Session put an interrogation in the guise of a warning to Mr. Marshall, the latter suddenly flushed up. This was most unusual with him; for he was almost always self-possessed against such a weakness as blushing, even though he had all the untrained impulsiveness of a poet. But he answered promptly:

"That depends, Mr. Chairman, on what poetry is; and how it is created."

Which remark gave the tactful and astute Chairman a clue, which he instantly seized, and said:

"Precisely. Now, Mr. Marshall will give us at our next Session an exact and comprehensive account of how that miracle, called a good poem, is created."

"Oh, really, Father Dillon, I never expected to be put in for this. I really do not know — that is, I cannot explain — the whole thing is comprised in the words, *Poeta nascitur, non fit!*"

"Of course," said Father Dillon. "But what we want to know; and what no one is more competent to teach us than Mr. Marshall, is, not how a poet is created; but how a poet creates his own work."

"It is difficult," said Mr. Marshall, hesitating; and somehow his glance seemed to stray towards where Olive Hunt was sitting. And that young lady, as if questioned by that glance, said at once, quoting Jean Paul:

"This singular man, it seems, will not reveal on what mountain heights the springs accumulate, which bubble up for him in the valleys."

It was oracular and strange, and Mrs. Holden drew in her breath and pursed her lips. But Mr. Marshall said:

"If the mountains are inaccessible, the poet must be content to watch the Pierian fountain at his feet."

There was a moment's embarrassing silence. Was it a retort courteous, or uncourteous? Was there a signal-code between these souls so far apart, of which the cypher was known but to themselves? Was there a command, that was disobeyed; a suggestion, that was refused?

The questions ran rapidly through the minds of some who were present. Then they solved themselves. For Mr. Marshall said:

"Yes. Very well. At our next meeting, Father Dillon."

"What a singular man, and what a singular girl, and what a singular lot we all are," said the Professor to Miss Fraser, as they walked down together to catch the 9:15 train. "The whole thing is too prosaic to be a romance; and then there is no plot, nor even the probability of a *dénouement*. But, it is a revelation."

"Yes!" she said, meekly. "Do you think it possible that the imagination of a young girl, like Miss Hunt, could be caught by such an old man, as Mr. Marshall?"

"That's a question which only a woman's heart can answer," he said. "It is just there that we men are all at sea. What do you think?"

"I think it quite possible," she said. "There seems to be an affinity somewhere between them. It might be their taste for poetry, or for music. She sings divinely. Poor Mrs. Holden! She is utterly eclipsed. And yet how bravely she carries on beneath such a defeat. But I am pleased that Mr. Marshall has attended to his toilet a little. If Miss Hunt had seen him, as we saw him, her fastidiousness would never recover the shock! He's a dear old man. I hope he'll keep himself free! Good-night. Here is Rushbrooke!"

There were some contradictions here, which, on reflection, made the Professor smile, as the train sped onward. But that penultimate sentence: "I hope he'll keep himself free,"

made him reflect more seriously. Was he touched on a weak point?

"I have searched and searched," said Mr. Marshall, at the next meeting, after the usual courtesies were exchanged, and solicitous inquiries made after Reginald Hunt, "for an adequate definition of Poetry in all manner of books; but I have not found one that seems satisfactory. I am like the king, who asked Simonides a deeper and a more sacred question; and the philosopher asked for a day's delay; and then another, and then another, and so on without end, implying that the question was unanswerable. This one, which I submit with all deference to our learned Society, seems to me to come nearer a right definition than any I have seen. I define Poetry to be: The attempt of the Conditioned to express the Absolute! I must not offend you by implying that these terms are unknown to you. Their meaning is apparent. We know that ourselves are limited and Conditioned by Time and Space, and all the other circumstances of imperfect beings. These limitations suggest, and prove, the illimitable. It is in straining to express that, we break into poetry. Hence, you see, at once, what a vast mass of crude, and commonplace verse I at once exclude. Tried by that touchstone, half the versification of the world rings false and hollow; and tried by the same standard there is poetry, Divine poetry in places where it is least to be expected. The ancients, with their anthropomorphic conceptions of their deities, were all poets; for although their deities took on themselves the forms and fashions, the voices and weaknesses of men, yet they had illimitable gifts — the attributes of the Absolute, — eternity, serenity, immobility, the silence of Olympus, and immortality. The same may be said of the savage, who personifies the elements of Nature, by making gods of them. He is only doing in a crude way what such Nature-Poets as Wordsworth accomplish philosophically and with the adjuncts of metrical verse; — what such a poet as Shelley did, when he personified Love and Grief and Fear.

Probably this concept touched its highest expression in Goethe, where he makes this outer universe the garment of the Eternal — the vesture, or outer coverings, ever-changing, never-resting, of that which is permanent and eternal. Sometimes, it is said, that Poetry is but the interpretation of the Beautiful. But this we cannot accept. If this were true, we should have to sacrifice the third part of Dante's *Commedia*, the greater part of Milton, the whole of Æschylus, the Tragedies of Shakspeare. Probably, the most poetic conception of Dante, whilst he was limited to human things, is that picture of Paolo and Francesca, whirled around on the brown air of Hell. You cannot call it beautiful. It is tragic, and pitiful. Yet it is poetic, because it is the suggestion in one concrete form of a something that belongs to the abstract and illimitable, the enduring nature of love, and the adamantine resistance of sacred and inviolable laws. I have said while he was limited to human things, because he alone, amongst the poets, has touched the Divine in a manner which has no parallel except the chapters of the Book of Revelations. Probably the lines of the *Paradiso* from

“‘E l' un dall' altro, come Iri da Iri,'

to the end of the Canto, denote the high-water mark of poetry.

“I dwell on these points with a view of disproving that a mere pretty idea, no matter how melodiously expressed, or a clever simile, or metaphor, or a piece of word-painting, may be poetry in the high sense in which I have defined it. I have seen persons go into ecstasy over a Homeric expression, such as the *δακρύνειν γελάσασα* in Book VI, or the onomatopœic line

Αἰ μὲν ἔτι ζῶν γόνυ Ἑκτορα φ' ἐνὶ οἴκῳ.

but translate the words, and get at their meaning, and what are they but bald prose? I have seen that line of Æschylus:

αἴλινον, αἴλινον εἶπε· ἀλλὰ τὸ εὖ νικάτω.

quoted and requoted as poetic perfection, but change it into

English, and how bald it is! I will go higher and ask whether that admirable Shakspearean line:

“‘The singing masons building roofs of gold’

is poetry? I admit it is a perfect line. Its symmetry, its beauty, its metaphoric correctness are perfect; but is it in touch with the Absolute? Does it take you out beyond Time and Space, and plant you amidst the Silences and Immensities of the Universe? Hardly. But, when he wrote:

“‘There’s not the smallest orb which thou beholdest,
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed Cherubim,’

he threw his imagination and ours into the ocean of infinitude. Hence, I conclude that mere pretty conceits, or musical expressions, are not poetry. The kernel of all real poetry must be the Idea. If that is not great, no mere vesture can make it so. Place it on stilts, or give it a tragic mask to carry its tones further and further, it remains not poetry, but vapid verse. I am not denying for a moment the necessity of Form, — of metre and of music. It is now indispensable, although I am convinced that the higher grades of poetry, such as the Hebrew Psalms, or the Canticle of Canticles, or the Book of Job, or the ancient Sagas of the Nations, or Richter amongst the Moderns, contain genuine and exalted poetry without the adjunct of metre or rhyme. I am speaking rather of modern requirements, just as I would speak of the adaptations of Handel or Mozart to harp or piano. The music may be there; but may not be interpreted. But, undoubtedly the Form is secondary. The Idea is paramount. For you cannot have an interpretation without a something that can be interpreted. Now, to revert to the original question:

“‘How that miracle, called a good poem, is created?’ Here one has to distinguish between inspiration and mere art. We know what they mean. The one is the sudden flashing on the spirit of an Idea, novel, startling, beautiful.

It comes we know not whence. It is as swift as lightning and as unexpected. It is gone in an instant, unless it is seized, as a camera seizes a lightning flash. And it brings with it its own garment, or interpretation in words. Here there is no trouble, no stretching of the *pia mater*, no selecting of expressions. The spirit of poesy is generous. She never sends her babe without its swaddling-clothes. Mere art, on the other hand, is laborious and painful; and probably, wears out more brain-tissue in the composition of a single line than is consumed in a mathematical thesis. The difference between the two — the poet who writes under inspiration, and the artist, who works out by rule, is just the difference between a Raffaele, dashing on the stretched canvas the Idea that is burning in his brain; and the artisan, who is laying mosaic from a pattern in his hands on the floor of a sanctuary. In the former case the Idea comes first, and is yearning to be put into execution. In the latter, the pieces are laid, — cubic, triangular, square, piece by piece, bit by bit, fitted in according to a Form, and then the worker stands by to compare. Here the Form comes first; and the Idea is sought and exhibited through the Form. Most modern poetry, except that of Shelley and perhaps Swinburne, is manufactured thus. The matrix or shape is laid down, the words are rhymed, and the Idea is squeezed and forced into that shape. Probably, the most prominent instance of this kind of work is to be found in *In Memoriam*. Take stanza after stanza; and watch how the rhymes are sought and shaped and fitted. Take this, for example:

“Heart-affluence in discursive talk
From household fountains never dry,
The critic clearness of an eye
That saw through all the Muses’ walk.”

Now, who ever before heard of the ‘Muses’ walk?’ Probably, the word ‘walk’ is the very last word one would think of in connection with the Muses. One could understand the

Muses' 'flight,' or the Muses' 'chariot,' or the Muses' 'viols,' or any other word, except 'walk.' Now, what happened? The first line is good, — a little obscure, but good. And then — the imagination of the poet ran down along the alphabet, until it struck upon the one word that would rhyme. He put it down, and filled in the pattern. Hence, you will find on reading the record of his life that he laboured at the refinement and elegance of his verses in a manner that was really intellectual drudgery; and you will also find that his critics, who desire to say the kindest thing of him, place his supreme excellence in having discovered, after painful and laborious searches — the 'word.' Of course, this is a great art, and Tennyson was a great artist. But, although it is the fashion nowadays to say that his genius found its culmination in the volume of 1842, and that whatever he wrote afterwards was artificial and inferior, I cannot agree with that verdict. There are passionate scenes and speeches in the 'Idylls of the King' that are a fair interpretation of other-worlds and Over-Souls; and there are poems, such as 'Vastness' and his last supreme lyric, that mark more than anything else he has written his deep sense of the Absolute. You will notice something similar in Byron. We now know that he had to smite his brain with gin and brandy before he struck from its unwilling recesses those sparks of rich rhetoric which have passed under the name of poetry. No poet ever *laboured* harder at the dreary work of composition. Hence, the occasional bathos that you meet everywhere, as in Wordsworth. Take that fine lyric, for example, 'The Isles of Greece;' take that stanza:

“Ye have the Pyrrhic dance as yet,
Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?
Of two such lessons why forget
The nobler and the manlier one?”

That is perfect. It is rhetoric and not poetry; but the anti-

thesis and the weight of words expressing it, cannot be equalled. Now, take the concluding lines of the same stanza:

“‘Ye have the letters Cadmus gave;
Think you he meant them for a slave?’

“Clearly, the poet’s diction was at fault here. To be grammatically correct he should have written:

“‘Think you he meant them for slaves?’

“But this would not rhyme. He had to sacrifice grammar to metre and rhythm. And again, there is no fine antithesis here as in the former lines. There is no violent contrast between ‘letters’ and ‘a slave.’ He must have heard of such a person as Epictetus surely. But it is only an instance of art, as apart from inspiration.

“The conclusion is quite manifest. A great poem is not created. It is given. It is the free gratuitous gift of the Muses to some favoured child. They demand no labour in return. Nay even they resent labour. The gift is too precious for human hands to spoil. And they are economic in their gifts. There is no divine largess here. As in Nature, her most precious things, her gold, her diamonds, her amethysts, are rare to be found, and almost infinitesimal in quantity, when found; so, too, the gracious gifts of Poesy are dispensed with thrift, and are precious both by reason of their intrinsic value, and their limitations. To one child only were they generous; and he attracted their notice by reason of his artlessness — in his life, and in his work. Hence, I believe, that as this truth becomes more fully acknowledged, the thick Anthologies and Beauties, which are so plentiful today will dwindle down in a most rapid progression, until some time we shall find that poetry — the real poetry of the world will be represented by great lines, that will stand out resplendent when the grosser things shall have been washed clean away. Even now, if you speak of poetry in the society of *litterati*, you will find that great lines only are remembered and quoted;

and sometimes, a great word holds in itself, and as it were in solution, some grand idea that lifts us above ourselves, and takes us out into the regions where sense fails, and only the spiritual essence of our mentality survives. Then the Absolute, which now draws us out of ourselves into itself, shall be revealed; and poetry shall cease, for vision shall take its place, and need no interpreter. Meanwhile, remember, it is only the tones of perfect poetry that Polyhymnia, as she floats above the dull atmosphere of the earth, and bends down to catch its voice, ever pauses to hear; and hearing, takes them with her to prove to the celestials that as Prometheus stole their fire for his beloved mortals, so some kind of spirit has communicated to earth the music of the immortals."

As the soft, melodious voice of Mr. Marshall dropped into a murmur of self-dispraise, he suddenly raised it again, and said:

"I feel I have but half-expressed what I mean. The truth is, words are but feeble exponents of the thoughts that surge through the human mind sometimes; and it is, above all, hard to express oneself in this bare and barren prose. I am afraid I may seem pedantic; but I think I have said all this better in one or two brief sonnets, which may I read?"

And all nodding assent, Mr. Marshall read from his notebook:

Unheard, unechoed by the ears of men,
There is a music doth appeal to me,
A chorus of transcendent melody,
Like a sea pausing, and coming once again.
Oh! that I could with voice, or work, or pen,
Transfix those rapturous sounds before they flee,
And keep for ever in my memory
Those chords divine beyond all human ken.

"Look thou on me!" these soul-chords seem to say;

"On me! on me!" re-echo all the rest,
As for a soul an angel casting lots;
And faint and far as at the close of day,
Arise like winds from out the burning west
The music of unutterable thoughts.

"That is one," said Mr. Marshall, fumbling sadly with his pocket-book. The other two are sequences:

Last night I saw an angel's perfect wing
Vast and resplendent, spread from pole to pole,
I marvelled that I never saw the whole
Celestial spirit in the boundless ring
Of spaces stretched beyond imagining.
There is some Fate that ever cheats the soul,
Some hidden Hand that deals to us a dole
Of hinted glories and perfectioning.

I know that angel's wing was but a swarm
Of cirrhous curds from some vast, milky cloud;
So teaches science; but the larger faiths
Create their own ideals uniform.
And still the lonely heart will cry aloud
Against those fragments — these too transient wraiths.

And yet I think a meaning might be sought
In these half-revelations from on high.
The palimpsest of the eternal sky
Hath secrets in its starred recesses wrought.
And all that Science — all that Art has brought
In their long trains to raise and beautify
This lower life, are hidden hints to try
What loveliness is linked with human thought.

Each new idea hath its Archetype
Of greatness or of beauty throned afar
Amid the spacious mansions of the Blest.
And when the Time in God's own mind grows ripe,
As flower that bursts, or roundings of a star,
The form shall fade; the type shall stand confest.

"I shall say no more. I suppose the paper will be discussed?"

"Certainly," said Father Dillon. "And I anticipate an interesting, if not a lively discussion."

At which Mr. Marshall seemed to look alarmed.

SESSION THIRTY-FIRST

THAT evening, Olive Hunt not only accompanied her young and newly-found friend to her home; but for the first time accepted the invitation of the latter to go in and see her pictures, books, etc.

"I'm so sorry," said Hester, "but mother has to retire rather early. She would be so happy to meet you."

The drawing-room was prettily, but scantily furnished. There were no valuable things there, neither was anything worthless. There was not a Cuyp, nor a Rousseau on the walls; but there were some delicate etchings of subjects that were known only to the initiated in high art and literature. On one table was a marble statuette of the Madonna, standing on a globe, her feet wreathed round by the serpent and resting on the crescent moon. The other tables were covered with books and magazines. Near the southern window was a pretty rosewood escritoire. Near the fireplace was a piano; and leaning up against the piano were violin and mandolin cases. The fire was burning brightly. Hester turned on the light, and bade her visitor be seated.

Olive Hunt threw a glance around the room; and, without removing her hat or cloak, sat down.

"It is a pretty little sanctum," she said. "You work there." She had pointed to the writing-desk, near the window.

"My work is little," said Hester smiling. "I just write my letters there, and no more."

"You have a view of the harbour from the window?"

"Yes! A lovely view. On summer evenings, and on autumn evenings, it is enchanting."

"You were born here?"

"Yes. Father was a Commander in the Navy; and was about to get his Captaincy when he died. This is he!"

She took down a faded photograph from the mantelpiece; but faded photographs are calumnious things.

"Mother has a miniature, which is very much better," she said. "I never saw father. He died abroad."

There was silence for a few seconds.

"Father was a countryman of yours," said Hester. "He was connected some way with the Hopes of Sussex. I believe they are what is called a 'good family.'"

"You don't know them, then?" said Miss Hunt.

"Oh, no!" said Hester. "I believe mother had one letter of condolence from some people over there; but we have had nothing further."

"What a singular man Mr. Marshall is," said Olive Hunt, suddenly changing the conversation.

"So you called him this evening!" said Hester laughing. "You said: This singular man!"

"Yes! but that was but a quotation. Yet, he is singular, quaint, old-worldish — just the kind of ancient that would catch a fancy like Gwendolen's."

"I see," said Hester. "You are the only living person that reads 'George Eliot' now."

"Perhaps! But, will you speak on Mr. Marshall's thesis — strange thesis, I must call it, — at the next Session?"

Hester gave her shoulders a little shrug. "Hardly. In fact, I never speak except I feel interested at the moment."

"You mean you don't prepare anything?"

"Yes! If the discussion awakens any new thought or sympathy, I join in. If not, I am silent."

"I feel I shall have to speak," said Olive Hunt, as if she were summoned by some superior power to do a determined thing. "I cannot allow all that Mr. Marshall says to pass without comment. Do you think it will pain him?"

"Not at all!" said Hester. "You are sure to speak gently and sympathetically; and then, I feel that Mr. Marshall will be flattered by your notice."

"I cannot allow it pass," said Olive Hunt, as if debating

with herself. "Some things were true; but I feel that some things were open to question. Then, you won't speak?"

"Unless my Irish temper rises," said Hester, laughing.

"Is Mr. Marshall Irish?"

"I believe so. He belongs to a very good family — the Marshalls of Marshallstown."

"What a strange expression!" said Olive Hunt, as if speaking to herself. "'A good family!' I've heard it so often from my kind hostess. She apologises for every little deprecatory remark by adding: 'But they belong to a very good family.'"

"It is one of our Irish idioms!" said Hester, laughing. "It does not mean 'good' in the moral sense; but only a certain distinction by reason of descent."

"Oh! and how many steps or grades must be taken, in order to be entitled to that distinction?"

"Oh, that depends," said Hester. "Some of our 'good' families can trace themselves back to Cromwell or Elizabeth. Some go back to a successful lawyer or doctor about thirty years ago. Some are successful merchants of yesterday. Some of today. A good deal depends on locality; and a good deal on religious beliefs."

"You surprise me! You said now that it is not a moral or religious goodness that is meant."

"Quite true. But it is this way. In this country a Protestant is supposed to be always more respectable than a Catholic. Our religion, you must know, is the religion of the kitchen and the poorhouse. And then, locality has a good deal to say to it. For example, a successful tea-merchant, who has amassed say a hundred thousand pounds, remains only a merchant if he continues to live in Cork. But, if he retains his business-house in Cork, and takes a villa down here, he becomes at once a gentleman; and is admitted into society. The sea air has a good deal to say to it."

"How very strange!" murmured Olive Hunt. "With us, of course, there are distinctions; but, I don't think we draw

them so sharply. In fact, I think we have more republican tendencies than you Irish."

"Quite so! We are a royal race, although you may remember that Swift discovered our regal representatives in the coal-porters on the Dublin quays. But I think I have been very self-restrained in not telling you that my father was a Protestant."

"Ah! And you won't make any comment on Mr. Marshall's paper?"

"No! I feel hardly competent; and — there is only one life now between Mr. Marshall and an earldom."

Then Olive Hunt smiled for the first time. She was beginning to understand this *strange people*.

"I anticipate a full and even a deeply interesting discussion on Mr. Marshall's paper," said Father Dillon at the next meeting of the *Sunetoi*. "I thought I perceived in that paper some controvertible positions; but I may have been mistaken. Now, ladies first, please! Miss Fraser, would you kindly give us your views?"

"I confess," said Miss Fraser, "that I felt I dissented from Mr. Marshall from the very beginning of his paper. I do not understand his definition, because I don't know what is meant by the 'Conditioned' and the 'Absolute.' I believe they are philosophical terms; and, though I come from a country of philosophers, I cannot grasp these shadows. And then, if I admit the definition, I at once annihilate our own 'puir Bobbie,' and that," said Miss Fraser, with strong emphasis, "I shall *never* do."

"And I," said Mrs. Holden, "am quite displeased with Mr. Marshall for depreciating Lord Tennyson —"

The word "Lord," however, seemed to recall her to her righteous frame of mind; for she said:

"Of course, I don't care for that old 'In Memoriam.' You couldn't set that to music. It is a funeral dirge. But I have Lord Tennyson's lovely songs here; and by and by I shall convert Mr. Marshall."

The latter gentleman bore these two feathery attacks with smiling equanimity. He knew he could brush them aside with ease. But when Father Dillon called Miss Hope; and Miss Hope resigned in favour of Olive Hunt, Mr. Marshall became serious. He leaned his head in a humble attitude, and his fine, white hair seemed to gleam like silver. But, at the first words of the young lady, he started and grew serious.

"I also feel it a duty," said Miss Hunt, in a calm, level voice, "to protest against that definition, on the grounds that, as Mr. Marshall afterwards explained, it excludes our interpretation of the Beautiful —"

"Pardon, a thousand pardons for interrupting," said the old man, now grown very serious, "but I think Miss Hunt has misinterpreted me. No wonder! Because it is so hard to grasp a subtle meaning at one reading. But, what I did say was that I could not accept the definition of poetry as being *merely* the interpretation of the Beautiful. I did not exclude the Beautiful; but I gave a definition that took in a wider range."

"Quite so," said Miss Hunt. "But, inasmuch as Mr. Marshall laid great stress on the Idea to be interpreted, may we not hold that the Idea of the Beautiful and the Perfect is alone worthy to be interpreted?"

"The Beautiful and the Perfect," murmured Mr. Marshall, turning over the words in his mind, "'The Beautiful and the Perfect!' Yes. Provided it is the Absolute Beauty and Perfection — not the limited and conditioned."

"But," said Miss Hunt, "how are we limited and imperfect beings to know, or understand, the Absolute? What is the Absolute?"

"Ha! There you open up those mighty avenues of thought, which to us seem to lead nowhere," said Mr. Marshall. "How shall I ever explain? Let me see. All our conceptions of beauty and perfection are purely relative — that is, not only limited and conditioned, but relative. Here comes in

the theory of the Hegelian contradictory. Every Ego supposing a non-Ego, imperfection suggesting perfection; limitations, the illimitable; time, eternity, etc. Now, as Miss Hunt so wisely says, we are unable to gauge the immeasurable; to fathom infinity; but it is in the effort to do so that we become ourselves great; it is in the expression of our longing after the infinite, we break into poetry. If we abide with that which is limited and imperfect, and find our final and ultimate happiness there, we may sing; but it will never be the full-throated song, whose 'echoes reach from soul to soul.' We sing; but like the linnet, who enjoyed his feeble little trill, whilst he alone was heard, but is silent with self-disgust, when the nightingale's solemn music breaks above his head, we find our songs pleasing, until some greater singer drowns them in the raptures of eternity. Let me take an instance. You have all heard of Marlowe's 'mighty line.' It deserved the name. He ranks only second to Shakspeare. I do not know if Ben Jonson was referring to his masculine verse in general, or but to one line; but certainly, there is no couplet so frequently quoted, and none that exemplifies his genius half so well as the lines:

"Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?"

Here now is an expression of the Beautiful — the most lovely thing of all antiquity — the face of the Grecian Helen. But, will anyone call these lines great poetry? No! It is a fine expression. That is all. So long as a poet reposes his imagination in that which though beautiful is limited, he remains the 'idle singer of an empty day.' He must launch the barque of his imagination on the ocean of infinity before he becomes great."

"I am afraid you would have to burn a good deal of Shakspeare and Homer, if you were to accept those definitions in reality," said Miss Hunt.

"Not so much of Homer," said Mr. Marshall. "But a good deal of Shakspeare is painfully human."

"It is not a little strange," said Father Dillon, breaking in, "that Mr. Marshall, in defining poetry, should have been teaching us Catholic theology."

There was quite a stir amongst the *Sunetoi* at this; and Mr. Marshall looked alarmed. Nothing was further from his mind than theology of any kind, most of all, Catholic theology.

"It is another instance," said Father Dillon, "of the close kinship of all human branches of knowledge. In saying that we only find great poetry in our attempts to seize and express the Infinite, Mr. Marshall was paraphrasing St. Augustine: 'Oh, Beauty, ever ancient, and ever new, too late have I known Thee: too late have I loved Thee!' And that is the cry of every great soul. For example, if I were to ask Mr. Marshall what was the greatest poem he has written, he would answer: The poem I never wrote!"

Mr. Marshall's face kindled at the little flattery; but Miss Hunt looked puzzled and said:

"But — but — am I to understand that there is no beauty, no grace, no loveliness on earth that may be worthily and righteously sung? What then of our loves: —

"The child, the flower, the sunset, and the sea?"

"Surely these things are beautiful; and may be worthily sung or chaunted even by our most inspired singers?"

"Yes!" said Mr. Marshall, reluctantly, "but these would not be the organ voices of the world. The full diapason is not heard; the *vox humana* is feeble, until it chaunts the glory of all archetypal loveliness."

He was slow to argue thus. His reason was contending with his admiration of the face before him. A lofty, yet lower feeling was whispering to him:

"Yes! and is not this your archetype?"

Father Dillon said:

"We go a little farther. We say, that to rest upon the beauty of the creature to the exclusion of the supreme Beauty is — Sin!"

"Sin?" said Miss Hunt.

"Sin?" said Miss Fraser.

The Professor looked the question, and said nothing.

"This is quite a surprise, Father Dillon," said Miss Hunt. "Then it is sinful to admire a sunset or the sea, or the face of a woman or a child?"

"No!" he said gravely. The subject was becoming a delicate and deep one. "I spoke of inordinate pleasure. You know our definition of sin is, the turning away from the Creator to His creature. To find the former and to repose in His perfections is our destiny. Whenever we turn aside from Him, Who is the end of our being, we sin!"

"I cannot understand!" said Miss Hunt, bewildered. "It is transcendental; but not real!"

"It is the only reality!" said the priest. "But, I think there is a great deal yet to be debated in Mr. Marshall's paper. We must, I think, postpone the discussion to our next Session. I propose that Mr. Marshall read that interesting, but debatable paper again tonight, so that we may carry away with us the little pegs whereon to hang our ideas. And then, Miss Hunt — will you play for us again that Rondo?"

"But you mustn't take any pleasure in my music," she said, mischievously. "It would be sinful."

There was a laugh at the priest's expense; but he waived it by saying:

"No! no! music is the voice of the Absolute! Is not that so, Mr. Marshall?"

But Mr. Marshall was silent. He was not going to take the part of a priest against such a lady as Olive Hunt. He then read his paper a second time.

SESSION THIRTY-SECOND

THE Professor led off the discussion at the next Session. He had come down chockful of the subject; and was clearly determined to antagonise some of the positions taken up by Mr. Marshall. Was it that the mighty hexameters of Homer, or the iambics of Æschylus were ringing in his ears, and spurring him on to do battle for the noblest forms of human speech; or was he going to contest the first position of Mr. Marshall, and deny that human emotion finds its best expression when straining after the Absolute? He was certainly very fidgety during the preliminaries; and when Father Dillon said at length:

“And now, ladies and gentlemen, we proceed to discuss further the admirable paper read at last meeting, and of which you must have a clear and well-defined recollection!” the Professor at once said:

“The main contention of Mr. Marshall, that is, his definition of Poetry, has been amiably disputed by the ladies, who evidently resent the idea that we cannot rest or repose in the loveliness of things present, but must always refer that loveliness to far-off, Divine things, intelligible, yet undefinable to our imagination. For myself, I admit the grandeur of the idea; although the difficulty of realising it seems to approach impossibility. But I, on a much lower level, cross swords with Mr. Marshall, inasmuch as I have to contravene his thesis, that the idea in poetry is the paramount thing, and the expression of but secondary importance. It is the old controversy about the relative merits of matter and form, which commenced with the Stagyrte, and shall end, no one knows when or where. But I contend that the utterance is everything; that the ‘word’ is supreme. For the question at once

arises, what is anything worth, until it is uttered? Where was the question of matter, or material things, when the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the deep, and all was Night and Chaos, until the Voice said: 'Let there be Light?' Would not that Chaos have lasted for ever, sunk in tumultuous anarchy, until the imperial edict went forth, and Light and Order were evolved from the primeval void? What peopled the firmament with worlds, the earth with its vast variety of creatures, but the Word, the Voice? Allowing that matter was there, without form and void, would it not have remained inorganic and effete for ever, if the Voice had not startled it into form and fecund life? —"

The Professor paused. Mr. Marshall had muttered something, but at once said:

"Continue, continue, Professor. I was merely saying that that was the Miltonic conception."

"And what if it were?" replied the Professor. "Take any theory of Creation you please, you cannot get rid of the *Voice*. Take any most extreme evolutionary dogma; and you must see that the word that gave form unto matter was super-essential. The creation, therefore, is God's utterance to the ages; and the worlds of his omnipotence echo back his glory: 'The heavens are telling the wonders of God; and the firmament announces his works. Abyss calls out to abyss in the voice of many waters.' On a lower scale, what is thought, emotion, feeling, — what is the Idea, which Mr. Marshall glorifies so much, what is it all worth, unless and until it is uttered? Emotion? Let this be sacred, holy, chaste — how does it affect our fellow-beings, until it is translated into human speech? Feeling? Let it be kindly, gentle, all-embracing in its fulness; self-sacrificing in its generosity — of what moment is it, if it is stifled by want of utterance? Genius? What is genius, until it expresses itself, and when it does express itself is not the expression greater in itself, and its manifold results, than the Idea that was hidden away in some convolution of the brain? Phidias stands before a block of marble. An idea

is seething in his mind, and clamouring to be expressed. Call that idea molecular action, or call it inspiration, of what use is its intrinsic grandeur, so long as it is locked up there in the iron safe of the artist's brain? It is of no more use than the hoard of a miser, or a diamond hidden in a mountain wady in Kaffraria. But, unlike the dull mechanic hoard, or the hidden pearl, it is a living thing, and it demands to be released. That can only be effected in one way. The artist seizes his chisel; and after some days of furious striving, lo! an Apollo steps forth from the glistening marble. It is the Form of the Idea, struck into sudden immortality, — the Idea, which would have remained latent for ever, or passed away into the oblivion of utter darkness and nothingness, were not the genius of the artist capable of moulding it into an expression of eternal and unapproachable loveliness. Or, take a Haydn, standing before his organ, or at his desk, with some vast Idea struggling for expression in his mind. Perhaps it was one of those subtle, intangible things that if not suddenly seized would evaporate, and be lost; or, perhaps, it is of a vaster and more concrete kind, that demands the full force of genius to express it. Days pass. The hand lies listless on the strings or keys. He touches them; but they do not respond; or respond but faintly to his summons. He abandons the Idea in despair; and apparently, that Idea has sunk beneath the deep waters; when suddenly, one day, one hour, and at a certain minute in that hour, his soul awakens up into active and imperious consciousness, his hands smite chords and keys with a certain kind of divine fury; and lo! the *Creation* is there on the manuscript before him; and needs only to be translated into the human speech of voice or instrument to become a glory and joy unto millions unto the end of time. Who will say here, that that noble Form and Expression of the hidden Idea is not the essence of the thing — its outward utterance, and eternal manifestation so long as music has its power to enthrall the senses and imagination of men? Or a poet, dreaming in that semi-delirium in which the great poets live, sees great

images and shapes arising, and crowding along the corridors of his brain. He yearns to seize them, and express them. And behold! His *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* is on the paper before him. He has taken the outlines that were stelled feebly on the canvas of the brain, and filled them in, and given them colour, and shape and form in one immortal poem. Yes! The Idea is the suggestion; the Form is its fulfilment. The Idea is the embryo; the Form is the perfect man. The Idea is the prompter behind the wings; the Form is the actor on the stage. The Idea is evanescent; the Form is eternal; the Idea is the ant-hill of Time; the Form is the Pyramid of eternity. Let it be supposed, that, in contradiction of the philosophical sequence, it is the Idea that animates the Form, and gives it Life. On the other hand, it must be conceded that it is the Form that brings forth, and causes the Idea to generate, gives it a specific existence, an externation which otherwise would be impossible, a beauty which the Idea in its naked truth does not possess. Let me take an illustration of this theory from two lines already quoted, — the lines of Marlowe on the Grecian Helen. We ask ourselves what is the Idea here, and what is its poetical worth. The Idea is: Was it beauty such as Helen's which caused the war with Troy? Nothing could be simpler, nothing more prosaic than this. It is a question that a historian might answer. No one would dream of asking such a question of a poet. But mark the transformation, when the poet's pencil touches the commonplace:

“‘Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?’

Who will say here, that the Idea is greater than the Form which clothes and transfigures it.

“Now, so far as mere Form is concerned, Tennyson stands alone in one department. As a scene-painter, he is unequalled. As a purveyor of conceits and antitheses, he cannot compare

with Shakspeare, although he has attempted that form of verse, as in the lyric:

“‘In love, if Love be Love, if Love be ours.’

As a builder of mighty phrases, again, he is inferior to Shakspeare; and to Keats. In one page of ‘Hyperion,’ Keats has more cloud-piercing and high-peaked phrases than in all Tennyson wrote. For example:

“‘she would have ta’en
Achilles by the hair, and bent his neck;
Or with a finger stayed Ixion’s wheel.’

and this:

“‘There was a listening fear in her regard,
As if calamity had but begun;
As if the vanward clouds of evil days
Had spent their malice, and the sullen roar
Was with its stored thunder labouring up.’

These are, as he says in the same page:

“‘the large utterance of the early Gods!’

On the other hand, in the mere music of Form alone, Tennyson stands pre-eminent. No man ever knew so fully the musical value of mere words; and could sing such a pleasant song about nothing. The very words of such lyrics as ‘Lady Clara Vere de Vere’ haunt one’s memory for ever. You cannot exorcise them by admitting their banality. They are like the Operas of which I spoke in my last paper — the libretto is absurd; the music is everything.

“I do not know how far I have carried the meeting with me in these remarks. Probably, they are not the final word on this subject. Let me conclude by saying, that if I differ in theory from Mr. Marshall, he must not be offended. Because, artist and thinker as he is, he is able to combine matter and

form in his poems, in a manner that is unique. Miss Fraser has favoured me with her book of 'Literary Cuttings.' The selections are choice, very much more so than are generally found in young ladies' albums; but amongst them the classic pieces by Mr. Marshall are conspicuous; and conspicuous amongst these pieces is the 'Egeria' to which allusion has been already made. May the Poet, like the Emperor, find his 'Egeria' amongst us!"

The *Sunetoi* forgot all the laws of correct deportment at this compliment; and did actually clap their hands, and say Hear! Hear!

But the subtle flattery did not wean away Mr. Marshall from his thesis. He had followed the Professor with attention, even taking down notes as the former went along in his airy refutation of the doctrine of the *Idea*. He now read these notes over rapidly, and said with a little smile:

"Permit me to return the compliment to the Professor. It is so pleasant to be able to cross swords smilingly, as in the days of chivalry, — days, which I fear it would be vain to hope, shall ever come back again. But, I must not be diverted by sweet words from the task I have set myself of proving still, that in poetry, and in all the arts the *Idea* is still the root and kernel of all greatness; and that the undue importance which the Professor attaches to Form is unfounded and untenable. For if the expression is everything, and the *Idea* underlying it is of secondary, or no importance, it would follow that the cameos and intaglios of an artist, like Benvenuto Cellini, were as great as a Phidian Apollo, or a Moses by Michael Angelo. For these trifling ornaments were also of perfect form and outline, the highest expression of that Art. It would also follow that a landscape by Claude Lorraine or Tempesta was as great as the Last Judgment on the walls of the Sistine Chapel; or that a portrait by Lawrence or Gainsborough was as great as the Dresden Madonna. In all these cases, I take it that the form, the expression, the externation of the *Idea* is equally perfect. In colour, form, outline, you

cannot say that the artistic elegance of one is surpassed by the artistic excellence of the other. Just as in nature, the rain-bowed sea-palace of the nautilus is as perfect as the rings of Saturn, yet no one would say it was as great or as awe-inspiring, so in Art, the tiniest miniature may equal in perfection of form the *Transfiguration*; one of those little quatrains called *vers de société* may be as perfect as a sonnet by Milton or Shakspeare; a *vaudeville* may be as perfect as a drama by Calderon; but no one would dream of instituting a comparison between such things. Where then lies the difference, if the artistic excellence, the form, is equal? Clearly in the *Idea*. It is the Idea, clothed in perfect Form, that lends its own attribute of grandeur to statue, picture, or poem. It is the perfection of the Idea, flung by the tiny lantern of the brain on canvas or marble or paper, that gives to the Form wherewith it is clothed that significance which we vaguely designate by the name of 'greatness.' And that is the reason why I again insist that it is only by our striving after the Absolute, we can become great; and that it is only by endeavouring to express the Absolute, we can achieve greatness in any Art. Why is the modern world crying out for 'a great poet,' who may rank with the *Dii majores* of English song? It is utterly disgusted and dissatisfied with your minor poets, with their tinkling verses and rounded rhymes, — their drawing-room *conchetti*, and tabloid sonnettes. The Art is perfect. That is undeniable. A Lord de Tabley, or a Le Gallienne, a Father Tabb, or Jean Ingelow can write the daintiest quatrains or the prettiest sentimentalities. But the world, that is, the very narrow and circumscribed world, that criticises without acceptance, and labels poems in a business-like manner, will not call these poets 'great' in any sense. Hence have we the phrases, 'the spacious times of great Elizabeth,' 'the organ-voice of Milton,' 'Marlowe's mighty line,' etc., indicating that the world is clearly desirous of harking back from the puerilities of the present to the great achievements of the past. Believe me, your 'Bells,

Bells, Bells,' and your 'Orianas,' and your 'Lady Clara Vere de Vere' will never meet the aspirations of a race that is lost, but which still retains certain heirlooms and credentials of former greatness. Men may idle away a pleasant hour, or relieve an over-taxed brain by turning over these harmless and musical lines. But it is idle to suppose that they will rest content therewith; or cease to look higher for the strenuous word and the large Idea that kindle and inflame our worthiest emotions. We are not all lost, just as we say we shall not all die! And the best proof of it is that in every Art, — not in poetry alone, but in every Art, which symbolises and preaches, we look behind the mechanical symmetry, or colour, or music, to ascertain if there be a something great and holy that is embodied in that outer expression. If that fails, the music of the poem is a zephyr borne away by the next breath; and the form and colour of your picture is but as the shadows that linger before a sun that rises, or after a sun that sets."

"Clearly, then, Mr. Marshall," said Father Dillon, rising to conclude the Session, you believe that

"To have the great poetic heart
Is more than all poetic fame."

"Verily, I do," said Mr. Marshall. "'The Voiceless' are after all the larger number, and perhaps among them is found many a 'mute, inglorious Milton.' I do not agree with the genial poet who wrote:

"Alas! for those who never sing,
But die with all their music in them."

For, it is a great privilege, a signet and seal of a noble nature, to have great sentiments, beautiful ideal pictures, noble thoughts accompanying them through life. These are gods, even though they do not know it. Far down in some new circle of an earthly Inferno are the *canaille*."

SESSION THIRTY-THIRD

THE full moon of a lovely April night was shining softly on sea and land, when the *Sunetoi* parted at the doctor's door. They seemed to linger, as if loth to leave, and perhaps the beauty of that matchless harbour, now fully revealed in the moonlight, which made the row of electric arcs across the Channel pale and feeble, detained them a little. And somehow the final words of Mr. Marshall, which survived the voluntary which Mrs. Holden performed as her valedictory and musical *Buona-notte*, seemed to have brought down upon them a certain solemnity, which struck them silent there on the pavement of Eastbourne. The nine o'clock gun from the guardship was the first thing to startle them; and the doctor said briskly:

"Mr. Hunt, you are not yet quite out of the wood. These night-dews are bad for you. Get home!"

Reginald Hunt, who was still too infirm to take anything but a languid interest in the proceedings of the Session, pulled his collar around his ears, and started off. His sister lingered, as if she were too absorbed in her thoughts to have heard the doctor's admonition. She then said to Hester:

"Let us come around by the high road. The night is so very beautiful."

They had not gone many paces, however, when Mr. Marshall, who had walked a little way towards the railway with the Professor and Miss Fraser, overtook them, and said, with his air of chivalry and good-breeding:

"May I have the pleasure of accompanying you, ladies? Our roads lead in the same direction."

Yet, strange to say, they found, as they walked along, that they had forgotten their homeward route, and were

on the high-road towards Whitepoint, where Mr. Marshall lived. For the old man, quite full of his subject, and somewhat excited by his own thoughts, and the silent manner in which his final words were accepted, continued in a kind of dithyrambic strain to pour out on his listeners the flood of thoughts that was now ebbing through his brain.

"Look you," he said, after he had gone over the main points of his argument with the Professor, "there are thoughts here," he took off his hat and passed his hand athwart his forehead, "which I would give worlds to be able to reveal. They burn there all day long; they wake me up at night with their persistence. If I could paint, or if I knew the art of music sufficiently to compose, perhaps I could express them. But when you have nothing but 'words, words, words,' as interpreters of your thoughts, what can one do? Truly, that good clergyman said tonight: The greatest poem is the one I have never written. By the way, how singular it is, that we, belonging to a different faith, and brought up in so different a manner, should sit under the baton of a priest, and play our little part in the symphony he has created."

"Take care, Mr. Marshall," said Miss Hunt, laughing. "Miss Hope, remember, belongs to the Roman faith."

"Ha! of course. But, you and I, —"

He stopped, quite embarrassed.

"Where was I? Oh, yes! I was saying that the greatest poem is that which I have never written, — never could write. It is so. Sometimes, there come surging up along the mind, not only pictures of landscapes that never existed, but dim and shadowy presentments of such transcendent beings, — such majesty of mien, such nobility of carriage, such vast silences all around them, such eloquent expression in their foreheads and eyes, that I think these must be the beings that throng the celestial courts, and are in the cabinets of the King. And sometimes, I picture them as denizens of far-off planets, circling around purple and orange suns, in conditions of spiritual essence and existence, which our feeble imaginations

cannot realise. For, the sad truth is, that our little planet is a poor thing in space. The Sun, our life-giver, our material god, is but a fourth-rate, or sixth-rate star; and we are proportionately little. What manner of beings inhabit these far-off worlds that are circling around Sirius and Aldebaran? How they must surpass us in all material and spiritual loveliness! How has the Almighty compounded their natures; and of what ethereal substances are they made? And, above all, what must be their knowledge, their mental powers, their subtlety, their swiftness! What are their ideas of this illimitable Universe, which to us, poor blindworms of the earth, is such a profound and irritating mystery! How they must cast their awful eyes across the oceans of space; and conscious of their own greatness, how they must wonder what manner of creatures inhabit this gross earth, spinning in blind mazes around its pallid Sun! And above all," he cried, sinking his voice to a whisper, "what are their loves, their passions, their emotions? For if Love with us is such a sacred and terrible thing, that it absorbs every faculty, throws us into unimaginable ecstasies, atrophies our reason and paralyses our intellect, what must Love be in those far-off and lustrous and colossal empires of the Lord, where there cannot be anything coarse or material, but everything, and in endless and eternal and ubiquitous creation, is spiritual and holy and sublime! Once, I thought that Doré had seized the Idea; but, I tore him into shreds. His drawings are but the caricatures of a comic journal. Then, I studied Fra Angelico; but there too, in those stiff and stony figures, I could not find my Ideals. Then, I leaned on Dante. But, after many years, it dawned upon me that he had seen Hell, but had never seen my suns and planets. I am alone with my dreams now — But, here we are!" he cried suddenly waking up, as the white walls of Whitepoint, made whiter by the white April moon, shone across the narrow strait. "Ladies, won't you come in, and rest? My little *ménage* is poor; but, — no? Well, then, good-night!"

He bowed his silvered head in the moonlight, and turned away. Then, a feeling of compunction seized and tortured him. In his raptures of imagination about the celestials, had he not slighted the Daughters of the Earth?

And they felt so. Woman is always jealous, where there is a question, or comparison of beauty. You may speak of intellect, of material or spiritual strength, of fancy, of imagination, even of goodness and virtue, and you may make your comparisons *ad libitum* and she is not touched. But she will suffer no rival, not even the angels, in that department which she has made her own. Perhaps, she is right. Otherwise, why did the Sons of God in the beginning of things seek the Daughters of the Earth?

Certainly, there were two daughters of this planet, who went home displeased.

"What a strange man!" said Olive Hunt. "And what a singular rhapsody!"

"At other times, and under other circumstances," said Miss Hope, "that man, with such an imagination, would be placed under restraint."

"Yet, I'm quite sorry we did not accept that invitation," said Olive. "I should have liked to see the den in which such a prophet and dreamer lived; and, — I am very curious about that poem. 'Egeria,' is it not?"

"Yes!" said Hester. "Miss Fraser has it in her portfolio, I believe; but I have never seen it."

"I should like to see how he imagines a mere woman, after such superb visions of his goddesses! I suppose Egeria was flesh and blood, like us poor mortals. He must have written of such a poor thing with contempt."

"You'll find not," said Hester, softening out a little, as she perceived that her companion was a little hurt. "You may be sure he came down from the stars. All these poets do. They find things cold up there; and they are glad to get back amongst mortals."

In such wise did our Daughters of Earth discuss the Dreamer

of the Immortals. And he sat over his fire musing; for the evenings were cold; and, as he dwelt on his dreams, he too shivered a little.

The paper read by Miss Fraser at the next session, although it seemed irrelevant to the debate on the matter and form of poetry, brought round at its close the kindred discussion that was but suspended at Whitepoint, when the old poet doffed his hat, and bade his young companions Good-night! The subject was Persian poetry, which was decidedly Epicurean, with a blend of Eastern mysticism running through it and preserving it from utter sensuality. It was cynical, too, and as uncomplimentary to the weaker sex as an essay by Schopenhauer; and when Miss Fraser quoted first the familiar lines:

“I, too, have a counsel for thee; O, mark it and keep it,
Since I received the same from the Master above —
Seek not for faith or for truth in a world of lightminded girls;
A thousand suitors reckons this dangerous bride.
Cumber thee not for the world; and this my precept forget not
'Tis but a toy that a vagabond sweetheart has left us.”

and then:

“I read on the porch of a palace bold
In a purple tablet letters cast, —
'A house though a million winters old
A house of earth comes down at last;
Then quarry the stones from the crystal All,
And build the Dome that shall not fall.'”

Miss Hunt said in a piqued, though self-possessed manner:

“I don't know why it is so; but there seems to be a conspiracy between poets against *us* and this lower world, as it is absurdly and unscientifically called. There, your Hafiz or Omar insults the whole sex; and here is Mr. Marshall telling us to cast our eyes upwards to the Absolute, and dreaming of some celestial houris in Saturn or Uranus that never can, and never did exist. For my part, I am quite satisfied with this

old earth of ours; and if good people are not satisfied with *us*, — well, I pity them!”

Miss Hunt did not toss her head, nor sniff the air, as a less dignified person might have done. But she looked very grand and dignified, something like Mabel in “The Falcon.” And Mr. Marshall, “made grave by her great beauty,” held down his head, humbled and abashed. He had strength enough to murmur:

“I went beyond Saturn and Uranus; I was thinking of the mighty planets that wheel around double suns, and take their orange or purple glories from those burning and beautiful centres. It is limiting the Imagination of the Infinite and Transcendent Being we call God to suppose that we are his greatest and noblest work, — we who are so conscious of our own limitations, that we call ourselves in mock humility, which, however, is truth, ‘worms of the earth.’ It is absurd to suppose that man stands at the apex of the created Universe. There can be no limit to the imagination, and therefore, the creative power of the Eternal.”

“Quite so,” said Miss Hunt, unappeased, “but for mere mortals and earth-worms such as we are, I think mortals should suffice.”

“Alas, no!” said Mr. Marshall meekly, “and there is the cause of all the earth’s unhappiness. If we could rest on earth, and in the love of mortals, all the ‘weight of all this unintelligible world’ would be lifted. But, because we cannot, because we are always aspiring after higher things, we are unhappy; and when we express our unhappiness, we are poets.”

“Then there is no earthly poetry; no songs of earth’s gladness and beauty, of sky and sea, and the season’s changes; of deeds done for humanity in war or peace, in the battlefield and in the cabinet? Why, you are destroying with one stroke of an evil wand half the beauty and glory of the world.”

Mr. Marshall looked around him in a mournful manner. His fair antagonist was pressing him too closely. He sighed a little and then said:

"Yet, it is strange, is it not? that, although my imagination can invent all manner of monsters, of dire chimeras, of dragon faces and forms, I am utterly unable to conceive any type of loveliness, divine or human, earthly or celestial, except the human face. Let me dream of seraphs. They are human. Of an archangel. He is human. Let me carry my fancy into the outer worlds of space, and try to people my planets with denizens as far beyond us as we are above the beasts. I cannot even imagine them, except as having the 'human face divine.' If I dream of anything else, I invent a world of monsters. Is this not strange?"

"Proving," said Miss Hunt, "that the most perfect type of beauty as yet revealed to us is the human type. We cannot even conceive of any other. Of course, we can picture abstractions, — goodness, holiness, meekness, charity. But we cannot picture beauty but under one form."

"Which proves?" said Mr. Marshall, looking humbly at his interrogator.

"That in animated and intelligent beings there is no other," she said. "Of course you have a certain beauty in the flower, in the bird, in the quartz-rock, in the sea-shell, in the dawn and in the sunset. But, as you say, there is not, there cannot be any conception of loveliness in reasoning and intelligent beings, except what is purely human."

"Perhaps it is because our faculties are limited," said her brother, breaking silence for the first time since his illness. "Our intellects are certainly limited. We cannot measure the boundless ocean of knowledge. Our wills are limited. We cannot resist the most simple laws of Nature. Our memories are limited by age and otherwise. Perhaps too our faculty of imagination is limited; and there may be countless forms of surpassing beauty, scattered here and there through the Universe, but of which we cannot form even a rudimentary idea."

"Then, how can we aspire after such?" said his sister. "You cannot desire the unknown?"

"No! But you can feel the want of such knowledge. There may be vague cravings of unsatisfied desire; a sublime restlessness in things that appear and are visible and tangible to us; a divine thirst for waters that are yet unseen in the desert."

Miss Hunt shrugged her shoulders.

"You are all Celts and dreamers," she said. "This is what Renan meant, when he accounted for all his spiritual vagaries by saying he was a Breton."

"But Mr. Hunt — your own brother?" exclaimed Hester Hope, laughing.

"He is lost, too," she said. "He has got into the fairy rath, and he is under the mystic spell of Celticism. I shall run away immediately. There is something in the very atmosphere that enchants one — I don't mean enchantment in its better sense, but an enchantment of druids and wizards; a kind of old-worldliness and other-worldliness, that makes one shiver and rush back to the light and warmth of the present. Don't you feel so, Professor; oh! I was going to add: and you, Miss Fraser, but I just remember that Miss Fraser too belongs to the Celtic fringe."

"I suppose," said the Professor, "that I must have come under the enchantment, too; and I really confess that I never go back to England without experiencing a shock of actuality. It is like getting up in the morning after pleasant dreams, when elves and fairies have been dancing on your pillow, and plunging into the dread reality of a cold bath. Certainly, Irish life is a little trying; but it is charming."

"And I perceive," said Miss Hunt, "that you have all contracted the habit of Irish evasion; because no one will answer me the one question I require to be answered, namely: Why should not we, denizens of this little sphere, find our duties, our delights, our cares and our pleasures here, without dreaming of other things, that are but dreams, and therefore make us unhappy? What do you say, Mr. Marshall?"

Mr. Marshall had been in a reverie; but he woke up at the words.

"Happy?" he said. "Happy? Is that the aim and end of all existence? It seems not, because it is an end we never attain. Therefore it cannot be ours. And again, happiness and greatness are incompatible. To be great, one must suffer, and try to continue to suffer; and be supremely discontented with his surroundings, and try to break away from them. He cannot succeed; he never will succeed. But the effort ennobles him. And when he is able to utter his anguish, he is what we call a poet."

"Well, this is utterly intolerable," said Olive Hunt. "Then I must say that you Irish can never be very great; for so far as I can see, your ordinary folk are as merry as mudlarks —"

"You never saw our politicians?" said the doctor drily.

"No! I cannot say that I did," she replied.

"Ah! 'Tis there you'll perceive the sublime," said the doctor. "Never mind these poets, and philosophers, and dreamers. They are a kind of Irish Buddhists, who are altogether abstracted from this world and dreaming of Nirvana. If you want to see the real, up-to-date, modern Celt, study our politicians. You'll find them nearly as practical as the 'Heathen Chinees.'"

Father Dillon was glowering at his friend, the doctor; but he kept his unceltic temper admirably in hand.

"At least," he said, "it must be admitted that we have had an interesting discussion on a difficult question. I believe most, — I was going to say, foreigners, but that seems an unkind expression, — I mean, those not of our race, do find us trying at first; and then so amiable that they cannot tear themselves away from us. May we hope that this will be the experience of the latest and happiest accession to our Club; and perhaps, Mr. Marshall will come down from the heights, and write us another 'Princess.'"

Mr. Marshall smiled, and looked quite happy. Then he said:

"If I may presume to remind you, Reverend Sir, Miss Hunt has not yet discharged the duty of submitting a paper to our meeting. I am sure we shall look forward to such an event with the most pleasant anticipations."

"Quite true!" said the priest. "Now, Miss Hunt, you have got the whole range of human knowledge and experience to choose from. And, remember, your paper will be fiercely discussed."

"I hope so," she said briefly. "Mr. Marshall is very kind."

And Mrs. Holden and Mrs. Skelton had a long debate that night as to whether Olive Hunt was really bent on being Lady Ormery; and whether Mr. Marshall was indifferent, or otherwise.

SESSION THIRTY-FOURTH

"THIS paper," said Miss Hunt, opening up a very dainty manuscript, and turning the pages towards the light, "is a protest by a mere Saxon against Celticism; of a modern and a progressivist against reactionaries; of one who believes in the cult of the actual against those who pin their faith to things transcendental and unreal. Let me add, that it is also a protest against the systematic self-deception, which poets and dreamers practice. It was hoped, vainly alas! that our greatest thinker and most practical philosopher, Lord Bacon, had weaned the human mind from its thirst after the vague and ill-defined phantasms created by the Greek imagination. And aided by his great contemporary, Shakespeare, the most human and real of poets, it was thought that the interests of this world, — its poetry, its magic, its beauty, its sublimity, — would have finally centred human thought on its own dwelling-place, and left the planetary and interstellar existences, if there be such, to look after themselves. But, unfortunately, human ambition is always overtopping human reason; and there are always poets and priests, who, not content with self-deception, proclaim to the multitude at large, *Ye shall be as Gods!* I am not now touching on religious questions. I hold fast by Revelation, and place my hopes in the eternal promises. But I feel that this lowering of our human nature by comparing it with imaginary standards of perfection in other planets; this turning, as if with the touch of a Circe's rod, human beings into mere microbes, infesting a little grain of sand in space; this complete annihilation of whatever makes for man's dignity and importance in the scale of universal being, is neither religious, nor reasonable. It overlooks the one important element in reason, as well as in art — the sense of perfect proportion. Allowing that

our world is but a grain of sand in space compared with colossal suns and systems, still it is a portion of the Universe as well as they. It has its own part, and I think a very beautiful part, to play in the harmonies and economies of Creation. If it has pleased the Ineffable Source of all being to fashion other worlds fairer than ours, that is no reason why our limited faculties for pleasure should roam abroad after what must be for ever no more than phantasms to us. Now this is the vice of Celticism. In the near past, it busied itself in creating fairies, and elves, and ghosts; the former, dancing harmlessly in the moonlight, or playing mischievous pranks on human beings; the latter haunting graveyards and old ruins and ancestral castles, making the flesh of old people creep, and little boys' hair stand on end with fright. Now, that you are reluctantly emerging from these superstitions created by the abnormal Celtic imagination, lo! you call upon science to build up for you faery planets in far-off spaces, and you people them with fresh images of your imagination. They are no longer frightful, because they are too far away to hurt; but they are beautiful beyond expression, and they make you discontented and unhappy with such a prosaic thing as this old ball of ours, and such plain and unattractive things as mere men and women. This, I believe, to be the main cause of Celtic despondency and melancholy. It may be very fine and very grand, and it may give you reason to despise such prosaic and matter-of-fact people as the English; but somehow I think those English, Lucretian philosophers as they are, get more out of life than you do; and at least it must be said, they bear life's little troubles with more equanimity. It is the same Celtic feature that keeps you so backward, so much in the rear of modern progress. You are the stragglers, helpless, and stumbling and fainting by the way, far, far behind the mighty caravan that is ploughing its way across the desert to the promised land. Whilst the rest of humanity is stretching forward, with hopeful eyes and straining energies towards the great goal to which our race is tending, you lag

behind, feeble-hearted, weak-brained, nursing with a kind of petulance your wrongs and rights, your impossible dreams and hopeless aspirations. You will not hitch on your waggon to the chariots of progress. You come out of your twilight dreams, lumbering up in the rear, and making the world hideous with your loud cries and lamentations. The pioneers of progress move hopefully onward, guarding the great silence that becomes brave men embarked on a noble quest. Silent they watch the signs of the times, eager to catch every indication that they are on the right track towards the final destiny of the race, and prompt to seize every vantage-point, that will help them onwards to their ultimate destination. They do not see *Hy-Brassils* or *New Atlantides*, because they have navigated and sounded and measured every square inch of the great deeps; and if they have seen no visionary islands on their bosom, they have found 'summer isles of Eden' lying, concrete and useful facts, beneath tropical climates. They do not cry out and clamour for the world's help. Their help must come from their own strong arms and active brains. They do not seek the world's alms. They would disdain to be considered in need of anyone's help. Strong, self-reliant, masterful, they use up their own energies to the last in seeking the goal of the race; and when these energies are exhausted, they harness to their triumphal car, *will they, will they*, the weaker races, and compel them to push or pull up the long heights that lead to the Temple of Victory. They leave you your dreams, your sighs, your tears. They think on the whole that the woman who sits on the wheel, with the trident in her hand, is greater than the Niobe of the nations with her pocket-handkerchief to her eyes. Hence, I conclude, that it would be more dignified on the whole for Celtic peoples to give up their astronomical aspirations, and busy themselves with this sublunary world. After all, the more your men of science penetrate into the awful abysses of Immensity, the more clear it seems to me that the Universe of matter that fills space is nothing more

than a huge smithy, where some Unseen Hand is forging suns and worlds without end; or rather, a kind of colossal battlefield where suns are hurtling countless masses of metal in every direction; and the stars we behold are like the braziers where the artillery-men of Heaven are lighting their matches to bombard every solid thing that exists in space. Here and there, out of all this dread tumult and collision of giant forces, some beautiful planet like our own shines calmly, as a snowdrop shows its loveliness amidst the hail-storms of March. Why should we turn away from our own sweetness and serenity, and beauty, to dream of impossible worlds where the wars of suns and systems are being waged? Let the Vulcans of space forge their thunderbolts, and amuse themselves by hurtling the huge fragments through immensity. For us is our own dear planet, with its dawns and sunsets, its majestic oceans and mountains, its sweet solemn rivers and lakes, its flowers and fruits, its brave men and beautiful women, who are greater than the material universe, because they are self-conscious and intelligent beings; and, if the universe fails to know them, it but shows that they are greater, because they have measured its extent, and seen its limitations, whereas to their own progress and power, the blind mechanical vortices of space can place no limit."

The gentle, firm voice of the girl had ceased its pleadings for mother earth and her daughters against the poets and dreamers of the universe. Because, it was quite clear that all her arguments were prompted by a certain lofty pride, stung to recrimination by the poet's dreams of greater and more beautiful beings. Mr. Marshall who was chiefly indicted, and was really the defendant in the case, had listened with bowed head to the formidable plea for Earth's Daughters against the houris or angels of his dreams. Did he see that behind that formidable indictment there were hurt feelings and wounded pride? The masculine intellect is dull; and seldom seeks the hidden agencies of things. Woman's intuitions are quicker; and, whilst there was a little buzz

of conversation around the room, Mrs. Holden had an opportunity of saying to Mrs. Skelton, her bosom friend:

"Did you understand all that fine language, my dear?"

"No—o—o!" said Mrs. Skelton, afraid to make the admission.

"But you understand, my dear, what Miss Olive means?"

"I—think—so!" said Mrs. Skelton, dubiously.

"That boy is dying at St. Moritz," said Mrs. Holden.

"Ah—ah!" said Mrs. Holden.

"I heard James say that he cannot live now many weeks, or even days."

"Ah—ah!" said Mrs. Skelton, looking with a kind of angry suspicion at Olive Hunt.

"And then — some people are ambitious, my dear!"

"But he is so old," murmured Mrs. Skelton.

"Old? What girl would care for that, if he can put a coronet on her head?"

"Those English are up to everything," said Mrs. Skelton. "I hoped it might be Hester!"

"She has set her little cap in another direction," said her friend. "But it is all Father Dillon's fault. Why didn't he allow Miss Hunt go away, as she wished? Now, he has trouble on his hands. For, mark me, my dear, Mr. Marshall will never marry our good Olive; and Hester is too good a Catholic to marry Reginald Hunt."

And in truth, the fair forehead of Father Dillon was wrinkling itself, where new cares were pressing upwards and downwards, making and leaving their little furrows. He did not like, by any means, that deadly assault on Celticism made by that fair young Saxon; and he was trying to devise some full and final answer to be submitted to the next meeting. Then, he saw that the good doctor had been actually gloating over his miseries, as the sweet, but deadly words came softly from the lips of the young girl.

"Everybody is leagued against us," he thought, "and now we are leagued against ourselves."

His eye caught the looks of Hester fixed anxiously upon him. She, too, had been deeply pained at what she had heard, for, strange to say, immersed in her own little romance, she had not noticed the tone of personality, — the little, wounded human voice, pleading through Olive Hunt's paper. Then she smiled. And Father Dillon smiled back. It roused him to a sense of immediate duty; and he said:

"We cannot discuss your admirable paper, Miss Hunt. That must be left for our next Session, although I am sure, we are all impatient to speak now, and controvert your views about us poor Celts. But it is just as well that we have time. Otherwise, we might be forging vocal thunderbolts, and hurtling them at one another, a little mimic war down here in the hollows of the universe. Have you brought anything new, our Laureate? Mr. Hunt is barely convalescent. We must not ask him as yet."

Mr. Marshall woke up as if from a dream, and wearily passed his hand across his forehead. He was evidently perturbed by the paper Miss Hunt had written; and he seemed to have lost that buoyancy and swiftness that usually characterised his movements.

"These have no bearing," he said, drawing out a pocket-book, and unfolding a paper, "on our present themes, although an ingenious mind could connect them. They were written prior to this Session; and I had other views in my mind. The first is styled a 'Vignette.' It runs thus:

Grinding of seas on sands,
Moaning of winds in the pines,
Fading of sunlit sails
O'er the horizon lines;
Fear-drawn faces of women,
Fear-set eyes of men, —
This, the vision that's girt
In the oval of life,
And then — — — ?

The other refers to Plato. I have called it:

WISDOM OR POESY

O wise old man, in whose capacious breast
Warm with the wisdom thy great goddess taught,
Nestled, as if by Fate or Fame impressed,
The snowy cygnet by Ariston brought.

Have its great wings, outstretched from Heaven to Earth,
Poised in the sun, or bathed in the sea,
O'ershadowed thee, the parent of its birth,
Quenching thy wisdom in its poesy?

Nay, this were all unmeet! If song upsprings
From out the lap of wisdom, it must rest
On earth, or in the empyrean, its tired wings,
Although it never know a home or nest.

And if in the empyrean, some white star
Enfolds it, as its disembodied soul;
But if on earth, it wandereth afar,
Beating bruised wings against a blind control.

Sudden it swoops, its world-vast pinions shrunk,
Falls like a star in the consuming sea;
And Plato sober turns from Plato drunk,
And folds his wings within the lap of thee.

Someone had asked: "Who was the 'wise old man?' and Mr. Marshall was about to reply, when Bob Skelton entered the room, looking somewhat scared, and yet important.

"We missed you, Mr. Skelton," said Father Dillon, "and you missed a lesson on practical politics. We'll have to fine you in future, when you come in late."

"Couldn't help it, Father Dillon," said Mr. Skelton. "A poor chap of ours was in trouble these last few days, and I was getting him off."

Then, as the grave company, whose motto was "Enlightenment," showed by their looks that they were human enough to take an interest in human trouble, he said:

"One of these fellows who can never learn sense. And mind you, he was not so young either. He was as bald as myself; and he had been with us a quarter of a century, and would probably have his branch next year, when the devil — I mean, temptation came across him."

"Speculations?" said the doctor.

"Yes and no! Not banking speculations — I'd forgive a little of that. We all do it. 'Tis gambling, I know. But where's the man can refuse to make a few hundreds by saying the little word, Buy? But this fellow went in for cattle-dealing, like a common butcher; and he knew no more about cattle than a cow does about a holiday —"

Here Robert was interrupted in his easy flow of language by Miss Hunt, who suddenly gave way to a fit of uncontrollable laughter. She laughed and laughed and laughed till the tears rolled down her cheeks. The rest of the company, more used to Robert's naïve way of telling things, saw nothing particularly ludicrous in his manner; but Miss Hunt was growing hysterical, when her brother, half-alarmed, said in a warning manner:

"Olive!"

And then the little tear-shower and April storm grew milder. Only a few drops lingered around his sister's eyes, just like those that hang on bush and grass on a mild wet April evening.

But Robert continued:

"As I was saying, this fellow, ——, knew nothing at all about cattle; so he had to consult someone, who gave him not only advice, but a friendly offer to invest his money. Which he did. Then the good man was kind enough to offer to keep poor ——'s cows on his own land for a consideration. The consideration was a bill, which was never entered in our books. The cattle were so valuable they would fetch double their price in a few weeks. Then, somehow, a disease broke out amongst the farmer's cows; and strange to say, all the cows that died were poor ——'s; and all the other cows recovered. And a few days ago, one of our fellows, an

Inspector, who can see a hole through a ladder as well as most men —”

Here Miss Hunt was again threatened with another paroxysm; but it passed off in a mild manner.

“The Inspector,” continued the imperturbable Bob, “thought he saw a mistake somewhere; and poor —— was suspended. He sent for me that night; and I never saw such a sad case. ‘Mr. Skelton,’ he said, ‘I hope you’ll not get into trouble over this.’ ‘Never mind me, my lad,’ I said. ‘Bob Skelton has weathered rougher weather. But what about yourself?’ ‘I suppose there’s nothing for it but arrest and imprisonment,’ he replied. ‘I have been a d—d ass. I should have known these scoundrels better. But I wouldn’t care, except for my wife and — child,’ and here the poor chap broke down utterly. I tell you, ladies and gentlemen, who are not yet tied up in the sacred bonds of matrimony, think twice before you put the hand-cuffs on —”

“For shame, Mr. Skelton!” said Father Dillon. “And your wife at your elbow!”

And Bob turned around; and to her intense indignation, he saluted his spouse before the company.

Miss Hunt had another mild attack of hysterics; and Robert continued:

“Then he said: ‘But you’ll see my wife. She has more sense than I. Perhaps you’d talk the matter over with her. But —’ he stopped, and whispered, ‘The moment the bobby puts his hand there,’ he pointed to his shoulder, and then to his right temple, ‘all will be over with me.’ I abused him and cursed him for a few seconds. Then he went out; and his wife came in. She was a little woman; a tiny little thing; but she had the heart and pluck of Julius Cæsar. I never saw anyone like her. She had one hundred pounds of nerve and grit and courage in every square inch of her little body. Ladies and gentlemen —”

Bob paused and looked around.

“I withdraw what I said a few minutes ago. I don’t

presume to advise the ladies. But I'd advise every gentleman present, except poor Father Dillon, who is out of the running, and James and myself, who are already spliced, to get tacked on to some little piece of womanhood, like my friend's wife. She caught on to that poor derelict, threw her hawser across his bows, and towed him away in safety this evening."

"That won't do," said Father Dillon. "That's too abrupt. Let us hear the whole story, Mr. Skelton!"

"Well, but there is no story," said Bob. "Me and the little woman put our heads together; and then I said: 'Look here! I'll just look up — and — They are great friends of your husband's, I believe.' 'Oh, yes!' she said, 'they've often dined with us. Mr. — will do anything for poor Fred.' 'You know,' I said, 'I cannot interfere too much, because I'm in charge.' She understood; and off I went, and for two days I called on every fellow I thought would have any interest with our Directors. The d—l a fellow of them would budge. 'Poor —,' said one ruffian, who had often borrowed money from —, 'he was foolish. Many a time I told him to get out of the cattle-line. It would ruin him. I can do nothing.' Another scoundrel, who had drunk as much champagne at poor —'s as would float the guardship, shook his head, too. 'He knew 'twould always come to this!' he said. '— was extravagant. Lived too high. People should live within their means. After all, a bank accountant isn't a lord.' I didn't strike the fellow. They're all alike; and where's the use of figuring in the Police-Court? At last, we got — away. He came down here last Thursday morning, got on board the *Adriatic*; then, the thought of his little babies came back to him; and he stepped on board the tender, when the captain shouted all ashore! We were at our wits' ends then, — me and the little woman. At last, I struck on the notion of seeing old —, the solicitor. It was at twelve o'clock last night. He came. I told him all. He pulled his long white

beard, looked around the room; asked a lot of questions, grew suddenly silent, if the maid came in; hummed and hawed and stammered. At last, the little woman lost patience and said: 'Mr. —, will you not tell us, what are we to do? I don't want to see Fred arrested. 'Twould kill him. Is there no help anywhere?' And our venerable friend pulled his white beard again, looked around the room, as if he suspected detectives were hiding behind the pictures, or up the chimney; and at last, he said, 'I'm afraid, Mrs. —, I cannot offer you any advice except — to pray!' 'Twas lucky, because it sent the little woman into a fit of laughing, from which she has not yet recovered. However, we managed to get — off this evening. And, to tell the truth, I suspect the Directors will be as glad as ourselves; because, after all, the sum was not too large; and I am sure, they didn't want to prosecute. But, by every hole in my coat, not a d—d one of these rascals will ever get a penny accommodation from me, or ever put his legs under my mahogany again! Remember, Minnie! I'll give you the black list; and not one of these fellows, nor his wife, nor his child, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant must enter Bob Skelton's house again."

SESSION THIRTY-FIFTH

"Now for the Gael *versus* the Gall — the old feud revived in a new and interesting form," said Father Dillon, smiling and rubbing his hands at the opening of next Session. To say the truth, he was whistling to keep up his courage, because he saw that sooner or later, his friend, the doctor, would be drawn into the vortex of controversy.

"It is only fair," he continued, "that we should give the Celt first a chance of replying. Mr. Marshall!"

But Mr. Marshall seemed dispirited, and waived the invitation, saying in a low tone of voice:

"I shall be a patient listener!"

"And you will break in when you feel interested?" said Father Dillon.

"I *am* deeply interested," said the gray old poet. "I shall wait."

"Well then," said Father Dillon, looking around in a puzzled manner. "We must carry on the debate. Miss Hope! You remember Miss Hunt's position?"

"Oh, to be sure," said Hester Hope. "Besides, we have talked it over since, — Miss Hunt and I —"

"Surely, you are not converted?" said Father Dillon. "That would be high treason!"

"Oh, not at all," said Hester Hope, laughing. "In fact, I feel I have proved to Miss Hunt that if we are laggards in the race of life by reason of our contempt for its practical issues, we have higher aims and instincts, and these, too, belong to our nature. And, furthermore, I have been saying that whatever is graceful and beautiful in English literature has taken the Celtic tinge of mysticism and melancholy."

"Very good. Carrying the war into the enemies' country. And then?"

"Well, of course, it is the old question of the dualism of our nature revived," said Hester. "If you believe in monism, and our good English friends are all monists —"

"I protest," said Reginald Hunt.

"And I," said the Professor.

"I was going to add — not in theory, but in practice," said Hester. "There is a theoretical belief in the supernatural; but it is regarded as the 'far-off, divine event,' of which the Poet speaks. Now, there's the exact difference between the Gael and the Gall. We believe the supernatural is all around us, that we are immersed in it, surrounded by it; and that it is continually breaking through the thin veil of material existence, and showing itself to us. When it fails to do so, we go half way towards it, and clamour for its manifestation. Hence, all our poetry is redolent of the supernatural; and strange to say, it is becoming more mystical as the years advance."

"I was about to contradict you, Miss Hope," said Father Dillon. "Because, from my limited knowledge of ancient Irish verse, it is as erotic and sensual as Catullus or Sappho. In fact, it cannot be translated."

"That refers to what may be called our Middle Age Poetry," said Hester Hope, whilst a faint blush overspread her features at the word "erotic." "I am of opinion that our eighteenth-century poetry was of the type you describe. But the ancient Irish sagas were not only free from that taint; but were highly tinged with all the mysticism and supernaturalism of the race. And our latest singers, going back for inspiration to the ancients, have caught their spiritual view of Nature."

"And tried to found a new religion upon it," said the doctor.

Father Dillon shivered, as he always did, when the doctor took part in their debates. The doctor's arguments were like the spears of Hector amongst the painted laths of polite controversy.

"I'm not offering an opinion on the subject-matter of the debate," said the doctor, "but if there be anything that

makes my soul sick it is the sentimentalism of our modern poets. Some of the expressions, the newly-coined words that express this kind of vapid verse, irritate me exceedingly. I never see that word 'mystic' but I am tempted to draw a great blue pencil daub across it. And I am never so disposed to break the second commandment and use profane language as when I stumble across that word 'elusive.' Was there ever such an abominable expression?"

"You'll find it in Matthew Arnold," said Reginald Hunt. "and he was a purist in language."

"I'm not objecting to the word so much as to its use and meaning," said the doctor. "And I object *in toto* to this mystic poetry with which we are now saturated and sickened, and which is turning us all into a nation of irrational, unthinking, and unpractical theorists."

"Thank you, doctor," said Miss Hunt. "I'm thankful to find one practical Celt on my side."

"Mind, I'm not a materialist," said the doctor, "either in religion or politics. I know we must keep great ideals before us. But, let us seek those ideals not in imaginary things that never did, or could exist; but in practical every-day life. When an old woman comes to me and says her son or daughter has got a 'blasht,' I know it means a whitlow, or a white swelling. When a farmer's wife talks about 'pishogues,' and 'the evil eye,' and the milk that will not produce cream, and the calves dying, I know that it is a specific microbe that has got in through the dirt and the filth of her dairy. And when a poet talks of the spiritual evolution of man, and the individualisation of the spirit in its peregrinations through the infirmaries of the human soul, I say at once: That fellow should give up eating opium, or drinking boiled tea."

"And so, doctor," said Reginald Hunt with suspicious urbanity, "you would have prescribed a sedative, — or a bromide or a little valerian for Shakespeare when he wrote 'Macbeth' and 'Lear?'"

"He shouldn't have touched these Celtic subjects," said the doctor. "He lost himself, as all men do, who come under the ancient Celtic spell. Now, contrast the massive solidity of his historical plays, their plain, blunt common sense; their brutality, their animalism, with all the airy nothings of witches, and travelling woods and mad old kings; and you'll see the exact difference between the good roast-beefish sense of England and the truffles and meringues of Celticism. I don't accept Buckle's theory of masterful races; but there's something in it. I tell you you can't bring up a masculine race on milk and water and moonshine; and you can never teach the people to plough the earth whilst gazing at the stars."

"But may not there be a certain section of the population who can plough the field, and another section who can study the stars?" said Hester Hope.

"Of course. But with us, all are star-gazers; and the fields are untilled and the sea unswept; whilst we shake our alms-box in the ears of the world."

"Mr. Marshall! Mr. Marshall, I have to cry to you out of the depths. Come to our aid. It is your faith we are defending," said Father Dillon.

And Mr. Marshall, as if awaking from a reverie, raised his head and said:

"Why labour the question? Has it not been said: Not by bread alone doth man live? Celticism is the cry of the spirit, heard of old in our lonely woods and forests, and along our lakes and meres, until the southern Celticism, called Catholicism, breathed upon us, and substituted a more subtle spiritualism for its Pagan predecessor, without, however, altogether eliminating the latter. Indeed some think that we are Pagans still; and that we have kept some of its distinctive doctrines, such as the eroticism of the eighteenth century and the fierce passion of revenge of all the centuries, whilst professing the doctrines of the gentle Christ. At least, we may believe that we are still the children of Nature. The Celts may be anything else; but they can never be Positivists.

Things must have a soul, before they can believe in them and love them. Hard facts are the objects of the Celt's implacable hatred. He must make poetry out of arithmetic. He accepts your circles and radii and parallel lines in Euclid; but he stretches the parallel lines into infinite space; and he expands your circles until they encompass infinity. He would rather believe a poetic lie than a hard truth. 'Tell us a story!' say the children with eager eyes. 'Tell us a story!' says the old man crouching over the red embers of his peat fire. It is the Celtic impulse to get away at any cost from the unendurable present; and to bury the imagination in an ideal past. You will have noticed, too, that the Celtic soul dreads the future. It hates to contemplate it; and when it does stretch its fancy so far, it is with melancholy forebodings. The colour it likes is not the drab, gray colours of the moment, or the sombre atmosphere of the future; but a certain golden aureole, a nimbus of radiated light, that hangs around its heroes, or its great and immortal historical splendours; or a rainbow of mists and tears that springs from earth to heaven, and is domed above those tender and beautiful if pathetic episodes that crowd out the heroic in her past history. You see then how it must idealise. It turns away from a huge six-storied mill in horror; and dwells with melancholy complacency on some old, tottering ruin hanging above a melancholy lake, or watching itself in the tidal waters of some lonely bight or bay along the Irish coast. It flies from trim parks and gardens and stately forests to seek the heather on a lonely mountain, where one wind-bent tree inclines as if in a kind of worship to the unseen gods that live and are worshipped in solitude. It hates novelty. I doubt if there be a word more detestable in the ears of a true Celt than that ominous word, 'modern progress.' Place a Celtic poet in the dining-room of a first-class hotel in London or Paris; and you have the picture of a miserable man. His place is in a cabin above the wild Atlantic, perched on some promontory in the Blasket Islands, or along the

natural fortifications of Aran. The Irish you meet abroad are the vulgar, modernised *parvenus* of the race. The real Celt never travels except under compulsion; and then he carries with him the atmosphere of his own country to breathe, just as he carries the odour of the peat fire in his garments. But his home is the mountain in its deepest defiles and recesses, or some lonely cavern where the sea has bitten into the land on the wild western coasts, and where only the walrus or the penguin come. His music is the lonely dirge of the winds that sweep across moorland, or hurry up the glaciated ravines of the hills, or rival the deep diapason of the sea, along the tortured seaboard. His literature is written in fire and tears — in the fire and tears of the many martyrdoms of the past, in the fire and tears of many a hard-fought battle in Flanders and Austria and Italy; in the fire and tears of persecution; in the fire and tears of conquests, unavailable, alas! for Ireland. To these his face has ever turned. The past is his worship, his religion, his love. He dare not look forward. For what can the future give him? Granted Home Rule, and all that it symbolises, what can a real Celt do with it? It will give him three solid meals a day; a ribald newspaper in the evening; and a glance at Pierrots or a Punch and Judy pantomime in summer. That is all. But what will it take away? Alas! that I should say it, what has the incipient progress we have made already, taken away? Our songs, our poetry, our history. For the wild heather of the mountain, where the eternal silences are only broken by the wailings of the wind; and the solitude is never startled except when a hare leaps timidly from its form, or a pheasant whirrs along the heather, we have given him the filth and vice and disease-laden atmosphere of our slums — the gin-palace — and the rabid politics of the market-place. For the old songs with their Oriental semitones, we have given him the latest music-hall abomination from London; and we have diligently blotted from his memory all the sweet, pure love-songs of his country; all the glorious battle-odes of history; all the lyrics and

swan-songs that have no equal in the literature of any other nation. I make no exception in favour of Scotland," continued the old man, turning politely to Miss Fraser, "because many of the sweetest ballads of that nation are Irish in origin; and you know that Robert Tannahill, your Scottish Chatterton, did come to Ireland to beg or borrow our Irish airs. Worst of all, we are engaged in disillusioning the Celtic mind. We are bent on weaning him away from all his lovely mind-creations, from his fays and fairies, his little gods and goddesses that haunted and made beautiful every tree and rock and hill in the enchanted land. And lastly, we have killed his poetic instincts by proving to him that where he saw absolute perfection, and broke into genuine poetry in his effort to personify or translate it, there is nothing but what is human and imperfect, and untranslatable into the magic of music and rhythm. Your Philistine, Matthew Arnold, defines poetry as 'the expression of beauty and a human nature perfect on all sides.' Your Coleridge, wizard as he was, defines poetry as 'the best words in their best form.' How far are they from the truth that is patent to every wild Celt in his mountain solitudes! For what are the dominant expressions in these two definitions? In the first, the dominant word is 'human;' in the second, the dominant expression is 'words.' What a gulf separates these two poets from the mountaineer watching his she-goats on Slieve Mis, and dreaming of mountain spirits and river-gnomes, or communing with the supernatural beings that form his religion and command his worship; or the fisherman in his coracle on the high seas, who sees sunken cities beneath the waves, and spirits beckoning to him from the high escarpments of his rock-bound coast, or hears at eventide the tolling of a mysterious bell that is rocked at every swing of the tide. Good Heavens!" cried the old man, forgetting himself, "why will you obtrude the unspeakable vulgarities of modern life in such sacrosanct solitudes? Why cannot you leave us alone — alone to live in our beloved silences, far away, far, far away

from the whirr and tumult of your hells and factories, your weaving and spinning, and gathering and spending? We do not trouble you. Why do you trouble us? The things we love are our realities, although you are officious enough to try to teach us otherwise. Leave us to our dreams of beauty and holiness while we live. And when we die, let us dream that we pass out to the unknown seas whilst we lie still and solemn in magic and crape-bound barques and are watched over by weeping queens."

The old poet stopped, and his head sank down on his breast. There was a reverential silence for a few seconds. Then the priest made a sign, and the meeting broke up.

The old man went home alone. He was sad and dispirited, and a little tired. He felt he was opposing something that was yet dear to him; that his loyalty to his ideas was compromising him with some human and earthly thing, which yet might possibly become an integral part of his life. Across his moonlight reveries, and blotting out many and most beautiful creations of his fancy, the face of one of Earth's Daughters would pass as in a magic mirror; and he grew disquieted by reason of a new and secret attraction which he felt he could not resist, and which was forcing him into disloyalty to all his former loves and ideals. He tried to shake it aside. He deliberately blotted out that face from fancy and memory. He argued, reasoned, and threatened. Can I descend? he thought. Do I not know all? Am I a boy, to be caught by a look, or a thread of hair? Has all my philosophy come to this — that in my old age (the Voice said: "Not so old; you are not sixty yet;") and he stood up, and looked at himself in a mirror) that in my old age, he went on reasoning and arguing, I should so far forget myself as to —?

He could not finish the sentence. Then, he suddenly remembered that once before he had passed through a similar agony, and that he wrote it down somewhere. He searched all his manuscripts; and, at length, he found an ordinary school-boy's penny copy-book, in which he had written:

I knew not earthly Love, because it sped
With burnt hair, and shattered wing, and wrecked
In face and feature, where it swept direct
Across my life-path. Then it turned and fled.

I watched it shuddering down a gloomy path
Where grew thick limes, and in a sunlit space
It turned once more, and stared me in the face,
With such despair, as but a lost soul hath.

Then in a sudden gust of blank amaze
A dusk came down, and all the world was gray,
The poplars shivered all along the way,
The stars were hidden in a gloomy haze.

A wind arose and whitened all the trees,
And curled the dark face of the running brook,
The limes, with perfumed blossoms, sighed and shook
A useless fragrance in the rifling breeze.

And my soul sank amid the gathering gloom
As if there yawned a wide and open grave
Of Hope and Love, and all things else that save
From present anguish, or eternal doom.

O fickle heart! O frail and fearful thing!
That stops thy beats at every panting breath,
And fain would leap into the arms of Death
At every ghost of thy imagining!

He smiled, folded the copy-book on the remaining verses,
and said, I shall return!

Reginald and Olive Hunt and Hester Hope went home the
same evening together. They, too, were preoccupied.

"I should like to see those mountains and those seas that
have such a fascination for Mr. Marshall," said Olive Hunt.
"I have seen all manner of scenery, Alpine and otherwise; but
I cannot understand what he means by such witchery as a

mountain or a lonely bog can have for him. And yet, as he went on in that strange, wistful way he has, I thought I felt some pleasant melancholy stealing over me — a kind of memory of ‘old unhappy, far-off things,’ which yet had a curious charm. He’s a strange man.”

“Take care, Olive,” said her brother, laughing. “The spell is coming down on you.”

“What spell? I’m not aware of any spell.”

“The Celtic glamour — the twilight of the gods,” he said. “You have put your foot within the fairy rath, and there is no escape.”

“You’re jesting. I’m not aware of any such enchantment. But I should like to see for myself the places that have such a weird beauty to a gentleman like Mr. Marshall. Are they very far away?”

She had addressed Hester Hope.

“Not at all,” said Hester. “You can run down to Kilarney in a couple of hours.”

“But that’s a tourist place, is it not?” said Olive Hunt. “I should imagine one could not have much of solitude there.”

“Quite true. But you can break away at once, and get in touch with untamed Nature,” said Hester.

“Then we shall try it. I *must* see the places that make such poets as Mr. Marshall.”

“Beware,” said her brother. “Remember there is no escape once you get within the magic circle. You have gone too far already. Merlin is not dead.”

“Then we must go further,” said his sister. “The weather is lovely now; and we have some days unengaged before us. Shall we start to-morrow?”

“To-morrow?” said her brother, alarmed.

“Yes, why not?” she said.

“Will Miss Hope come?”

“Of course she will. Won’t you, Hester? You cannot leave two unsophisticated Saxons to explore your ancestral wilds alone!”

And Hester agreed, pending her mother's consent. So they were to start for some Celtic highland on the morrow.

Reginald Hunt was a little dazed at the suddenness. He could only murmur:

“Merlin is not dead. What will come of it?”

SESSION THIRTY-SIXTH

THEY started on that strange quest on the morrow. It is probable that of all the myriads who enter that Kingdom of Kerry, they were the only travellers who sought not scenic beauty so much as the Celtic magic that accompanies it, — the subtle enchantment that steeps the soul in reveries, from which it never again awakens.

It was only on the third day of their travels, and when, braving the inconveniences that belong to out-of-the-way places, they had plunged into the unknown spaces of the Kingdom, that they began to see and understand a little of what Mr. Marshall had striven by words to interpret. They determined to walk, and to use no vehicle in exploring the hidden depths of mountain and valley; and thus they were able to pause and dwell on beauties on which the express tourist merely casts a careless glance. The second day they chatted gaily, as they trudged along the splendid roads; laughed and exchanged salutations with carters and tramps, entered lonely cabins where they always had wholesome food and a warm welcome; and put up at night in some village inn. But the third day the solemnity of the mountains swept down upon them; and, amazed at each other, they were silent. The awful loneliness of those vast ranges, which sometimes shot up in peaks, and sometimes lay prone with breasts open to sun and seawind along the beds of the valleys, crept into their hearts; and it was only now and again the young English girl could find speech to say, "Oh! how wonderful!" when, on turning abruptly some corner in a high and hilly road, some vast scene of loveliness burst upon them, and made them stand still in surprise. The deeper they plunged into out-of-the-world places, the more they found themselves cast back into ancient and legendary times, when chieftains rose up on white

horses from mountain lakes and called their kernes together; or phantom huntsmen broke across gorse and brake and limestone walls, followed by phantom dogs in pursuit of phantom game. For a curious atmosphere seemed to hang down over the entire country, a strange blue tint that wrapped mountain and mere and sea in one common vesture of loveliness, until the whole atmosphere seemed to be steeped in that dreamy twilight that hangs over the Val d'Arno, when the sun has set beyond San Miniato.

One day, Olive Hunt, oppressed by the strange weird scene before them, when they had climbed a sudden summit and the sea shone beneath them, mirroring one black crag of an island that shot like a needle from the deep, sat down upon a rock, and began to cry. Her brother was alarmed, and spoke to her.

"I have seen it all in a dream," she said, "long, long ago when I was a child. And, then, I saw it again when I read the 'Idylls of the King.' Was Tennyson ever here?"

"He was," said Hester. "He wrote his bugle-song down there below in the Lakes."

"I thought so. This was the place of Arthur and his Knights. It was up along that river that

"the dead,
Oared by the dumb, went upward with the flood.'

I saw the old dumb servitor yesterday in the face of that old fisherman that took us across the lake. I was wondering where I had seen him before, 'winking his eyes, and twisted all his face.' And down there, look, down there, where these women are, with their black shawls around their heads; yes, down there, was the barge and the three queens that took Arthur away to the unknown. Oh, I see it all now! It is wonderful, is it not?"

But her brother shook his head gravely, and murmured something about uncanny places, and strange spells.

It is probable that the strange manners of this primitive

people and their still stranger language had something to do with this enchantment. Olive Hunt, relaxing somewhat her cold manner, took the mute glances of admiration that were showered upon her by peasant and wayfarer with pleasure. She studied the strange physiognomy of the people as she studied the features of the landscape. Sometimes, her hand would rush to her portfolio and pencil, to sketch some old gnarled peasant face framed in the door of a mud cabin; and often she caught herself staring and wondering at the Madonna-like faces of the young girls framed in their black snoods — faces, that looked at her half in merriment, half in curiosity, and always with such shy admiration, that she thought she could clasp them in her arms, and kiss them, and call them “sister.” And the little children, with deep blue eyes, just the colour of their mountain lakes, before the sun sets, and the long curved fringes of black eyelids that strove to conceal them, were a perpetual wonder to her. And when her shyness and their shyness were overcome, and she drew close to this strange people, and heard their soft melodious words and saw the love shining in their eyes, she thought she could never get back to civilisation again.

“Let us build three tents,” she said, “no! two; and we shall stay here for ever. For, it is good for us to be here.”

And her companions did not say, Nay! for once upon a high cliff Hester’s foot had stumbled, and Reginald Hunt had caught her hand, as she was falling; and there was a certain look of terror in his eyes that revealed a deeper feeling.

He had turned away, white with fear — fear of what had almost happened to her, fear of what he knew had happened to himself.

“It is this Celtic enchantment!” he said. “There is no escape, I fear!”

And exactly in the same way, a great dread had come down upon the soul of the old man, who had first spoken to them of this Celtic enchantment. The morning after the last Session, two letters lay upon his breakfast table — one from a leading

London literary journal, accepting a short poem which he had sent with but faint hopes that it would be accepted. The other was from St. Moritz, from the dying boy, whose last breath would make himself an Earl in the high rank of the nobility of Great Britain and Ireland. It was a pathetic letter, although it ran through few lines; and it scattered to the winds the little feeling of triumph he had felt on the reading of the note accepting his poem.

"So runs this human life of ours," he thought; "this moment in the sunlight; the next in gloom."

But there was one line that made the old man gasp. It ran thus:

"And then you can put our coronet on some fair young girl, who will bless you!"

It startled him, for it ran in a line with his thoughts. It dazed him by its impossibility. He wouldn't entertain the thought for a moment. But back it came with frightful persistence. He remembered how he had passed through the agony before, and conquered it. He took up his note-book to see how the evil thing had been exorcised, and read:

Then in the midnight, when the earth was still,
And sleeping, and the stars alone awoke;
And men lay prone, God's pity to evoke,
And flowers their feeble incense did distil, /

There came a little voice, so still, so soft,
'Twas only like th' awakening of a bird
At matin dawn, so faint, so feebly heard,
Like a faint breath amid the elms aloft.

It came, it paused, and then it went away;
Came once again, a little stronger grown,
As a great master thrills to deeper tone
The keys that 'neath his nervous fingers lay.

And then it grew articulate. It said:
"Lo, I am come again! I stand and bide

Your waking, tho' you've banished all beside:
I come, as comes a voice from out the dead,

"Dark ages that have vanished. Lo, I come
To stay with thee, and never more depart,
For I shall build my nest within thy heart,
And thou must crush thy heart to strike me dumb.

"Yes, I am come; and I shall stay and speak
Things that enrapture; things that agonise.
And tears will burn thy cheeks; and in thine eyes
Tears, that will globe all joys the heart can seek."

He remembered it all now. The whole little romance of his youth came back. It seemed so childish, so small, so far away, that he pitied himself for ever even entertaining such a fancy. He laid down his note-book; and went over and unlocked a little drawer in a very ancient bureau, built solidly of old Spanish mahogany. He took out a faded roll of letters. The red tape was now white; and snapped asunder, rotten with age and damp. A thin gold chain, very dirty but un-rusted, hung down. He followed its edge until it terminated in a little locket, which he drew forth, with a trembling hand. He opened the cover, which was engraved with flowers, and saw a little portrait, and a little dark, sunny hair. He sat down, watched, waited, and wept. It was a soul gazing at him from eternity. Then, he wondered all the more how he had resisted the soft pleadings of such a face, and again he read:

But I awoke; and conscious answered, No!
I cannot see thy Face throughout the night,
But memory warns where doth fail the sight;
Oh, siren voice, oh, siren features, Go!

Thou, who art ever fated to betray;
Thy kiss, Delilah's; and thy silken wiles
Wreathed in death-nets; and thy specious smiles
Harbingers of woe, if I obey,

Sing thy songs elsewhere; take thy honeyed arts
And practise them on those who have not found
A wail of death from out th' encircling bound
That limits the desires of human hearts!

And then a wind arose, and smothered speech
And drew down silence, and I said: Thou'rt blest!
Sleep now, dear soul, and take thy tranquil rest
Far, far beyond the siren's perilous reach.

Sail down the gulfs of unencumbered thought,
Round the high seas where nothing impious dwells,
Only the sweet winds come; and statelier swells
The pregnant sails in their embraces caught.

And let no anchor stay the hurrying ship
On its vast course towards th' eternal shore,
Where breaking surges echo, Evermore!
Nor suns, nor moons, behind the horizon dip.

"Ha!" said the old poet, folding up locket and chain, and letters, "I conquered then; and I shall conquer now!"

Hence the thirty-sixth Session of the *Sunetoi* was a blank. The young tourists were in the Kerry wilds. Mr. Marshall wrote that he was troubled about his young relative away in Switzerland. The Professor was very busy with the examination-papers for degrees. Mr. Skelton was very busy with his half-yearly accounts. Miss Fraser was busy with her young pupils, who, under the head of "Private Studies," had entered for University Examinations.

"Well, 'tis our first disappointment," said Father Dillon to the doctor, as they sat together in the latter's study. "I suppose it means the usual relaxation before final dissolution. But, in any case, we were to close next week. And on the whole we haven't done badly."

"No!" said the doctor, smoking placidly. "In fact, it is a phenomenon in this country of ours, that we have kept

together so well. I suppose such a thing never happened before."

"Possibly," said Father Dillon, with a little pride. "Looking back now I see that it was a daring attempt. There was one element of success in the secrecy of our meetings and discussions. I suppose, if we had published our little doings, we should have been killed with ridicule."

"That was quite certain," said the doctor. "But I have an idea, that you would have failed, if Bob hadn't been lucky enough to bring in old Marshall. He was certainly a help."

"He was. What a quaint and interesting figure. I wonder will he marry Olive Hunt?"

"He won't," said the doctor. "He may be enamoured of the lady. 'No fool like the old fool;' and age is no proof against such attractions. But he won't marry anyone!"

"Mrs. Holden thinks otherwise. She's quite sure that Miss Hunt will propose for him herself."

"Ah! There it is," said the doctor, "Jennie is not above the weaknesses of her sex. But Mr. Marshall won't marry — Lord or Commoner, whatever he becomes, or remains."

He smoked on in silence for a few minutes.

"Do you know that though I argued against him at our last meeting, I was arguing against myself, — or rather, my convictions were playing the mischief with my feelings. When he spoke of the mountains and their solitude, and all that, I almost cried. I knew it all, all!"

Father Dillon looked at him incredulously.

"In my young days," calmly continued the doctor, "I knew some of the men of that time. I met Mitchell once, a dark, gloomy, melancholy Beresark, frightfully in earnest, but with a deep strain of poetry running through his character. And I knew John Martin well. These men had one common characteristic — truth. They couldn't lie. There was no such thing as compromise with them. Everything is compromise now. Soon, we shall be compromising with old Nick, and making bargains as in the old Irish legends. But," con-

tinued the doctor, noticing the priest's uneasiness, "what I'm coming to is this. I never go back to the old bogs and fenlands of my native county, but I feel just as old Marshall described. Of course, I'm a practical man, and go in for progress and all that. I like these new labourers' cottages with their slate roofs, the pretty garden in front, the creepers on the walls and all that. But my heart does not soften. The glamour of the past is not around them. But, when I skirt the foot of some awful solitary old mountain up there in Connaught, and see the old white-washed mud cabins, the thatched roofs, the little square of window, I can never help thinking of the lines:

"Out from many a mudwall cabin
Eyes were watching through that night,
Many a manly heart was throbbing
For the blessed warning-light.
Murmurs passed along the valleys
Like the Banshee's lonely croon,
And a thousand pikes were flashing
In the risin' of the moon.'

I see it all, all. The moonlight streaming along the valley; the big, stalwart figure of Tighe, or Donal or Donough, filling up the door. His little wife behind him, not a bit afraid. The pike, the Croppy pike, leaning against the wall. The little children sleeping in their cots. And then the signal-light flashing across the valley. Out he goes after one farewell kiss to join his comrades down there by the river. My God! 'twas grand, grand! There were men in these days!"

He flung his cigar into the fireplace, rose up, stuck his hands in his pockets, and remained for some moments in an attitude of thinking. He then turned to the priest, and said:

"Yes, Marshall was right. Do you know it struck me before; but, as a matter of fact, every thoughtful Irishman dreads the future. No one dares say what he expects. If we are to have prosperity, such as the prosperity of England and America, it will be awful and unbearable. The streets of our

cities are bad enough now. What would they be, if we had money?"

The priest murmured something about advancing education.

"Advancing education? Where is it, and what signs can you see of it? No! 'The unendurable present.' What an expression, and what a truth! And the formidable future! Do you know what I think, Father Dillon? I think you and I will live to see the day, when the Bishops will go, mitre in hand, to beg the aid and protection of the Imperial Parliament —"

"Absurd," said the priest. "Really, doctor, your imagination runs riot sometimes. You shouldn't yield to such delusions, although they are harmless enough."

"Unless," continued the doctor, as if he had not heard him, but was moving along the lines of his own thoughts, "you are wise enough to entrain the great Conservative Protestant element in the country, and build it into a bulwark against Socialism and Jacobinism."

"Yes, and put a whip into their hands to lash us with, as they did before," said the priest bitterly.

"No! That day is gone. But, mark me, if you fail to secure that ally, your Church will suffer."

"Let us go up-stairs!" said Father Dillon. He felt the doctor was talking lurid poetry under the Celtic spell.

"Next Thursday will be our last meeting," he said to Mrs. Holden. "Do you know what I propose? We'll have a grand wind-up over at Church Bay. The trippers haven't commenced to come down as yet; and we'll have the place to ourselves. I'll guarantee the hampers —"

"You'll do nothing of the kind, Father Dillon," said Mrs. Holden, with her usual sense of hospitality, "that's our department. You can get the boat, if you like. But suppose it rains?"

"We must take that chance," he said. "I'll get the Commissioner's boat — no, by Jove, Mr. Hunt will get us a steam-

launch, and we can run over in half an hour. We'll have lunch at one; then our final and magnificent wind-up of the session; tea at five, and home!"

But Mrs. Holden's face fell. She could not take her piano on the launch.

"No!" she said decisively. "The grand *finale* must be here, where we practically commenced. I'll have supper here, and then —"

"Of course," said the clever Father Dillon. "I was forgetting. We'll wind up the literary session on the cliffs; but the musical session here with a grand vocal and instrumental concert. It will be a worthy termination of a grand term."

"Let me see," said Mrs. Holden, whose fancy was already busy with details, "I'll want a ham, and a round of beef, and a shoulder of mutton — could we have potatoes boiled over there?"

"Of course. There's a new Hotel, you know, where we shall have tea."

"Then an apple-tart, queen-pudding, mince-pies, and fruit and cheese. All right."

"Don't forget the liquor, Jennie," said the doctor.

"And will you bring Bridget?" said the priest.

But Mrs. Holden looked at him angrily.

"I'll bring my housemaid and cook," she said.

SESSION THIRTY-SEVENTH

GLORIOUS June weather, a sun in the zenith pouring down his torrid rays, a gentle breeze from the seas that rippled from shore to shore and spent themselves beneath the red, barren cliffs, shorn of every trace of vegetation in order that the big guns in their embrasures might play out at sea without obstruction; a grassy cliff not yet trampled into brown earth by the feet of Sunday trippers — such were the novel surroundings amidst which the *Sunetoi* held their closing session. The steam-launch, — the Admiral's, if you please, secured without trouble by Reginald Hunt, and which for that reason was greater in Mrs. Holden's eyes than Cleopatra's splendid barge — was more than ample for the accommodation of the members and the servants. They ran across the harbour in less than half an hour, disembarked without accident, had the heavy hampers dragged up the cliff, chose a little hollow for their symposium; and, avoiding that miserable *quart d'heure* before meals which is the most embarrassing time in the existence of us poor mortals, sat down to lunch the moment the hampers were unpacked, and the cloths laid on the soft grass of the cliff. It would take the pen of the poet who made music out of a venison pasty to describe the culinary wonders which Mrs. Holden had provided for her guests. I have not the *menu* at hand; and I confess I don't like writing a category of victuals, like the head waiter at a seaside hotel. But I may say with impunity that there were three bottles of champagne; and that no empty champagne-bottle went back in the hamper. This does not argue total-abstinence by any means, as we shall see.

Everyone that has been at a picnic, *fête-champêtre*, or other out-door entertainment, knows that the chief obstacle to human happiness is the difficulty of getting into a comfortable

posture. But, as became a clergyman, Father Dillon was on his knees; and it was in that attitude, that he delivered his farewell address. What he said was this:

"If I were a magician with the power of turning all human things into a kind of poetical Elysium, stripping them of all sordidness and earthiness, and transmuting them into unalloyed and ethereal perfection, I could not have chosen a happier scene, or more perfect surroundings for our final Session than have, by a series of delightful coincidences, fallen to our lot today. And surely, this happy meeting is the fortunate termination, may I say suspension? of such pleasant intellectual moments that I, at least, look back upon them with a kind of regretful pleasure, and not a little pride. I admit, now that we have reached the successful issue of our enterprise, that it was a hazardous one. To bring together members of three different nationalities, and three different and sometimes antagonistic forms of religious belief, to discuss questions that are seldom debated even by cool and self-restrained minds without some heat, seemed one of the rashest experiments that could enter the brain of an enthusiast. And yet, it has been not a qualified, but a decided success. We have gone over the entire field of human thought; discussed poetry, philosophy, metaphysics, medicine, education, religion, and even politics; and we have not had so much as a breeze to ruffle our tempers and make us regret entering on such an engagement. We met for the first time, comparative strangers; we part (temporarily I hope) fast friends. I lay no claim to be considered even a humble constituent in this successful venture. I feel so happy that I think it is a positive delight to efface myself, and to rejoice in the consummation of hopes, which, I admit, wavered a little from time to time, but which each day's experience steadied more and more unto the end. Where there has been so much uniform excellence, I dare not particularise. Where there has been such mutual and cordial help, I would think it invidious to mark out anyone for special commendation. But I

may be permitted to draw a conclusion. I have been always a believer in the essential goodness of mankind. I have felt that the little clouds of misapprehension and prejudice that shade the faces of men from each other and create such violent prejudices might be happily and readily blown away by the simple device of bringing people closer together, and letting them see each other as they are, and not as we sometimes, with traditional bias, suppose them to be. Some of the most charming people I ever met, even outside our own happy coterie, have been English and Scotch. Some of the most beautiful souls I have ever seen do not belong to the religion I profess. None of us, thank God, has a monopoly of goodness. It is like God's sunshine, everywhere. And I think it is a glorious thing that we are permitted to acknowledge that goodness and that grace, wherever we find it. And, on the other hand, I know nothing more pitiable than the narrow views some people take of life, and the sour misanthropy in which they pass through this world, unloving and unloved, and cherishing a dark and loathsome pride in their alienation from all that is wholesome and sweet in other human lives. Let me hope that broader views and more generous and kindly thoughts may be spread abroad amongst our fellow countrymen under the benign influence of education; and that the more we read, and thus grow in sympathy with the masterminds of the world, the more we may grow in mental and moral stature, expanding our ideas until they become comprehensive enough to embrace a Universe, and our principles until they touch the widest human limits of gentle and comprehensive charity."

The words were received with gentle applause and affirmation by the *Sunetoi*. Mr. Marshall's eyes were fixed on the speaker throughout, as if he were drinking in such words as an answer and revelation to his thoughts. For his alas! was a disturbed and tortured mind. It was the battlefield between reason and feeling; and it was torn in the combat.

Whenever during a more or less serene and tranquil life,

such disturbances arose, he could always soothe them into silence by what he called "a dose of astronomy." One mighty fact in that stupendous science, like a little pellet or tabloid of valerian or bromide, stilled the little war within his brain. It revealed the unspeakable littleness and insignificance of things human; and they ceased to torment him. But one cannot escape from oneself so easily. Men cannot change their condition. They must accept, for all they are worth, their own nature and environments; and reason is powerless in the grasp of habit. And, hence, although the facts of the Universe were unchangeable; and every fresh search into its awful secrets revealed its inexhaustible and ever-increasing marvels, Nature would come back to its furrow, and nestle there. He knew it well. He had experienced it in youth and early manhood. He had it all written down in the little school-boy's copy-book — the struggle, the reasoning, the victory, compromised again and again; and the final defeat. Only that morning, he had read with a certain humiliation these lines:

Ah! and how frail are these same fraudulent bands
Of high resolve and holy hope and fear!
How when the helmsman, Passion, seeks to steer
The Ship of Life, the strongest chain expands,

Stretches its rusty length, protests and breaks,
And out upon the seas the unhelmed Ship
Rolls in the grasp of mighty waves that dip
And fall away in seething, snowy flakes.

True, I dethroned the helmsman and placed
A cold experienced Intellect to guide
My Ship along the waves from tide to tide,
And all the map of his sea-journey traced.

And bade him sail from snow-capped Pole to Pole
Of high, cold thoughts, — to shun the tropic seas,
To spread his sails to no hot, wanton breeze,
To keep far out from rock and sandy shoal,

To close his ears against all siren songs,
And lash his sailors to the iron mast
And blindly cut the seas till dangers past,
Far, far away did moan the treacherous throngs.

Ah! but how futile. There's a mutinous crew
Within each human heart, and all the power
Concentred in the Captain of an hour
Has vanished, like a mist of morning dew.

Yes! The old poet was flinging up his hands. He was enmeshed; and he knew it. He was humiliated, and yet not displeased. He did not reproach himself any longer with the taunt, Am I a school-boy? He took hope in the words of the young priest:

"And our principles till they touch the widest limits of gentle and comprehensive charity."

The little party broke up. Some strolled upwards to gain the narrow path which wound around the sea-cliffs, and hung almost perilously above the sea. The doctor and Mrs. Holden and Mrs. Skelton and Father Dillon sought the ease and shelter of the Hotel. Here the gentlemen smoked leisurely; the ladies took out their work; and Father Dillon buried himself in his breviary.

Looking up after the retreating figures of their companions, they saw how naturally they had divided themselves into three groups. The first were Reginald Hunt and Hester Hope; the second, the tall figures of the Professor and Miss Fraser; the third were Mr. Marshall, walking with bowed head by the side of the stately figure of Olive Hunt.

"There all things end," said the doctor, "no matter what you may think of your bank notes, Bob!"

"They can't do without me, though," said Bob.

"I foretold how all this would end," said the doctor, "in two or three unhappy marriages."

"Why, unhappy?" said his wife.

"Didn't I tell you, Father Dillon," said the doctor, unheed-

ing his wife's question, and incontinently disturbing the young priest at his prayers, "how all this would end?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" said Father Dillon, unwilling to lose the thread of his psalms, lest he should have to repeat them again from the beginning, "I know, I know. *Masculum et feminam fecit eos!*"

At which the doctor smiled.

Then, when the priest had finished his office, Bob stood up and said:

"Look here, Father Dillon; look here, Doc; come down to the beach, and let us be boys again for an hour. We are sworn to take back no empty bottles today!"

"You mustn't touch the sherry or claret bottles," said the good housewife, Mrs. Holden. "I should have to pay the wine-merchant twopence a piece for them."

"But the champagne-bottles are no use? are they?" said Bob.

"No! you can take them; although I don't know what use you can make of them," said Mrs. Holden.

"Well, come along and you'll see!" said Bob. They strolled over the grass to where Beatrice and her fellow-servant were tidying things and getting the hampers ready when the launch returned at six o'clock.

"These are mine, Bridgie," said Bob, taking up the three champagne bottles. "'Twasn't bad execution for eleven, with other little trimmings thrown in; though, to tell the truth, I'd rather one drop of John Jameson than the whole of it. But you won't see these three dead men again. We are going to bury them."

He led the way to the sandy beach, and selected a nice flat rock at a good distance, because, he said, they were to have a full hour's lawful fun; and he didn't wish to have the bottles broken too easily.

"Aunt Sally?" said the doctor, looking on critically.

"Exactly," said Robert. "Now all good sportsmen have a chance. Here are the pebbles; there is Aunt Sally; terms

of the game, sixpence a piece to the sportsman that kills Aunt Sally. Here goes!"

His stone flew wide of the mark; and he leaned down with a sense of sudden pain. He had forgotten that ancient companion in his right shoulder, and the twinge brought it to memory.

"Ha!" he said. "I forgot. I thought I was sixteen, instead of sixty. There is a difference, doctor, eh?"

And he tried to slew round his left hand, and soothe the angry place.

Father Dillon threw, and smashed the first bottle in smithereens.

"Sixpence, please," said he, taking up the second bottle, and proceeding to place it.

"Did he shoot fair, Doc?" said Robert.

"No," said the doctor. "He threw a boulder, instead of a pebble. He couldn't miss it."

"He mustn't do it again," said Robert. "'Tis getting d—d hot."

He threw off his coat, and revealed shining shirt sleeves, of which his good wife, who was seated near Mrs. Holden, and bending over her work, was justly proud. The other gentlemen followed his example.

Here then were three genuine sportsmen, in shirt sleeves and bared heads, struggling with all their might to smash sundry bottles. The sun beat down hotly; and, glancing off the thick black hair of the young priest, it turned the bald heads of the doctor and the banker into shining copper-coloured balls. But they heeded not; but yelled, and hurled with all their might; and scolded and protested and quarrelled in the mimic warfare, whilst the thick green bottle stuck as unharmed as if a regiment of raw recruits were firing their magazine rifles at it.

Yes, they were boys again; and happy, because the secret of all human happiness is to keep the heart of a child throughout the growth and changes of advanced life. They shouted and laughed and cried:

"That's not fair!"

"You threw two stones!"

"Toe the line!"

"Oh, Father Dillon, you're a disgrace to your cloth!"

"How can I, when I'm in my shirt sleeves?"

"Sixpence, please!"

"Cheatery chin will never win!"

At last, and with a shout of triumph, the manager smashed the bottle; and just then, a voice rang down from the summit of the cliff:

"Bravo, Mr. Skelton!"

And looking up, the three gentlemen saw to their dismay the entire cliff above their heads lined with three rows of heads of men, women, and children, enjoying with a broad grin on every feature the amusement that was provided for them below.

Father Dillon went over in a sheepish kind of way and put on his coat. He was thinking how would he face his congregation next Sunday. He recognised amongst the crowd some of his confraternity. The doctor put on his coat, wondering would he ever get a paying patient again. The manager, more of a philosopher than either the man of science or the minister of religion, shouted back to his admirers on the cliff-side:

"Come down, lads, and have a shy. 'Tis sixpence if you hit the bottle."

There was a cheer, and several small boys slid down the cliff at imminent danger to their necks. Then the gentlemen retired. The doctor asked his spouse rather petulantly:

"You saw them, Jennie. Why didn't you warn us?"

She said it was too good a joke to spoil by any undue feminine interference.

By the time they reached the Hotel, the other members had assembled; and tea was ready. Five o'clock tea! Next after the phosphorus match, the greatest invention of the nineteenth century, I most cordially agree with the late Dean Stanley in thinking that it is by far the most delightful meal of the day. Breakfast is embarrassed by unpleasant

letters, and the forthcoming labours of the approaching hours. I can imagine how tiresome must have been the literary breakfasts of the early eighties, even with such a wit as old Samuel Rogers in the chair, and such guests as Southey and Wordsworth. The later political breakfasts given by Gladstone and his contemporaries must have been dull affairs, weighted, as they must have been, with ponderous political speculations, and hampered by physical weariness after last night's debate. Luncheon again is but a pause, a momentary cessation from labour for a hurried repast. And dinner is an elaborate ceremonial, stretching its weary way from eight to eleven o'clock through a series of unnecessary and tiresome courses. But five o'clock tea! The day's work is over practically. There are three hours to dinner. There is no ceremony. The meal is light. You can sit, stand, lounge, or walk about. You can read, write, chat, as you please. Verily, it is the day's golden hour.

And when, as with our *Sunetoi*, one is surrounded by friends on the verandah of a country hotel, with the sea at one's feet, brilliant sunshine overhead, and an absence of all care, it seems to be the veritable Elysium of our poets' dreams.

"Did you ever write a poem, or even a sonnet on five o'clock tea?" said Father Dillon to Mr. Marshall.

"Never!" said the good gray poet, "but in such pleasant surroundings, and with such a retrospect of the last few months, I confess I consider this moment the happiest of my existence!"

The old man looked so happy and was so sincere, that the sunshine seemed to spread itself all around; and the doctor's face, that had been screwed up in annoyance since the events on the beach, began to relax a little.

"I tell you," whispered Mrs. Holden to her friend, "that he has proposed and been accepted. He'd never look so pleasant otherwise."

"I wonder did Hester accept Mr. Hunt?" whispered back her friend.

"I doubt it. Hester can wait. Her mother would not listen to such a thing."

"But, young ladies nowadays have their own way."

"Of course. I suppose these are some of the troubles before us all. Beatrice, order some fresh tea."

And Beatrice, who enjoyed the day as well as her superiors, and who had been also speculating on the ever-interesting subject of possible engagements and marriages, tripped away smilingly, and told the cook everything — that the old gentleman, who was Lord Ordinary, was about to marry the tall handsome English girl; and that the tall, dark man with a tinge of gray in his beard was engaged to the fair, young Scottish Lady; and that Mr. Hunt, the young engineer at Haulbowline, would marry that pretty young girl, Hester Hope, at once; but that she had no fortune. In such wise is history made!

Suddenly, a white cap peered above the cliff side, and Mrs. Holden said: "My goodness! there are the men of the launch. Can it be six o'clock?"

But it was. For the Angelus Bell was chiming from the Presentation Convent; and the deep boom of the Cathedral Bell was wafted across the waters; and they *should* go. Time and tide do not wait, until time and tides shall be no more. Very early the following morning, the doctor was roused by the tinkling of the electric bell in the hall from the deep slumbers in which the fatigues of the previous day had plunged him. He rose instantly, because he knew that to such a summons there was but one answer; and donning his dressing-gown, he flung up his bedroom window, and hailed the driver of the covered car which was drawn up beneath.

"Mr. Marshall, of Whitepoint, sir, is unwell. His servant says she's afraid you'll not reach him alive."

The doctor guessed what that message meant; nevertheless he put some instruments and a little strychnine in his pocket; and in a quarter of an hour, he was standing in the hall of Mr. Marshall's house. The servant opened the door of the little study at the right; and he entered. The shutters

were closed; and the electric light was on. This the doctor switched off, and bidding the servant fling open the shutters, and draw the blinds, he approached the figure of the old man seated at his desk. One glance, and one touch on the cold, dead hand, told him all.

"It is all over," he said, "he has been dead for hours."

The servant left the room, weeping.

Then the doctor sat and watched the mute figure before him. One arm lay on the desk; and in the fingers of the right hand, a pen was clutched. The eyes were open but glazed. There was no speculation here. On the desk were three documents. One was a freshly-opened copy of the *Athenæum*. The torn wrapper was near. The paper had been opened, but had sprung back into its fold. The doctor gently opened it again; and read on the fourth page the poem, whose acceptance was such a pleasure to the old poet. The second was a letter. It was dated three days before; and came from St. Moritz. It commenced:

My Lord:—

I have to inform you that your cousin—

The doctor thought he had no right to read further.

The third was a school-boy's copy-book, in which it was clear Mr. Marshall had been writing, when the summons came. The full glory of a summer morning streamed along the page; and lighted up the words which were written in the neat hand which the dead poet affected, and of which he was not a little proud. It was verse; and the practical doctor had no taste for verse or poetry of any kind. Nevertheless, casting a glance from time to time at the mute figure before him, as if he thought at any moment it might speak, he read:

I woke from dreams and high resolves, and heard
Beside my pillow that same pleading voice,
It said: For me with mortals there's no choice
For all the futile rage within them stirred

By my insistence. For I cannot cease
To advocate the eternal innate worth
That lies in Love up from the tiniest birth
To where seraphic essences increase,

And grow to perfect stature by my power,
For this the Eternal is, and Infinite,
That sets no bounds to Love's seraphic flight,
Nor dwarfs Eternity within an hour.

So long as voices of the midnight seas
Echo in hollow murmurs along the shore
Or startle mortals with their strident roar
And winds wake chaunting dolorous litanies,

So long shall I pursue my fated task,
And put in human hearts the loud refrain
That never ceases from a voice of pain,
But sinks into a wail, or fiercely asks

Some human thing to cling to — some soft hand
To press and feel amid the utmost stress, —
The consciousness of its own nothingness —

There the words ceased. Clearly the good, old poet had been conquered by the Voice. The "dose of astronomy" had been ineffectual. Some years have gone by; but three questions are still troubling Mrs. Holden:

1st. Did Mr. Marshall know he was Lord Ormery in the peerage of the United Kingdom that day on the cliffs above Church Bay?

2d. Did he propose to Olive Hunt?

3d. Did Olive Hunt accept?

Three questions, which, unless Miss Olive Hunt chooses to break silence, must remain unanswered for ever!

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